



3 1761 06216341 5

Hy 3

77



Presented to the
LIBRARIES *of the*
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

by

Hugh Anson-Cartwright

WORKS
OF THE
ENGLISH PURITAN DIVINES.

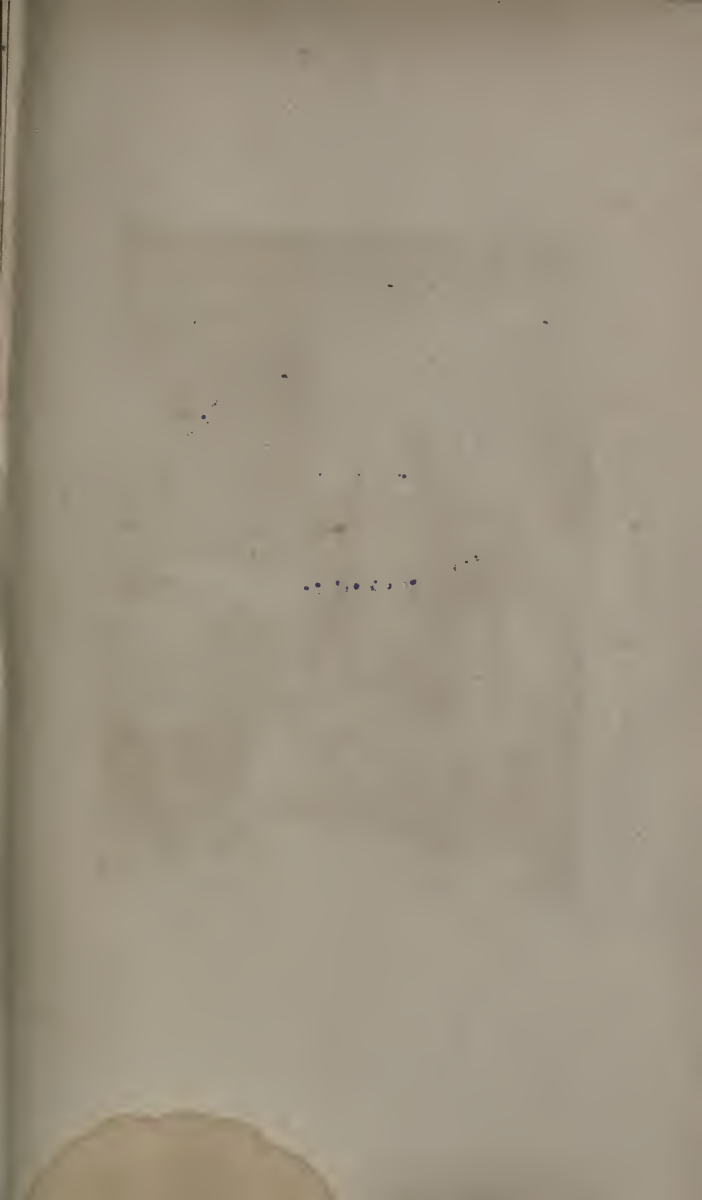
BUNYAN.



LIBRARY

JUN 02 2004

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO





JOHN BUNYAN IN PRISON

John Bunyan

WORKS
OF THE
ENGLISH PURITAN DIVINES.

BUNYAN.



Bunyan's College at Elstow

London

THOMAS NELSON PATERNOSTER ROW

1845.

THE JERUSALEM SINNER SAVED:

THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN:

THE TRINITY AND A CHRISTIAN: THE LAW AND A CHRISTIAN:

&c. &c.

BY

JOHN BUNYAN:

TO WHICH IS APPENDED,
AN EXHORTATION TO PEACE AND UNITY.



WITH LIFE OF BUNYAN BY
THE REV. JAMES HAMILTON,

SCOTCH CHURCH, REGENT SQUARE, LONDON.



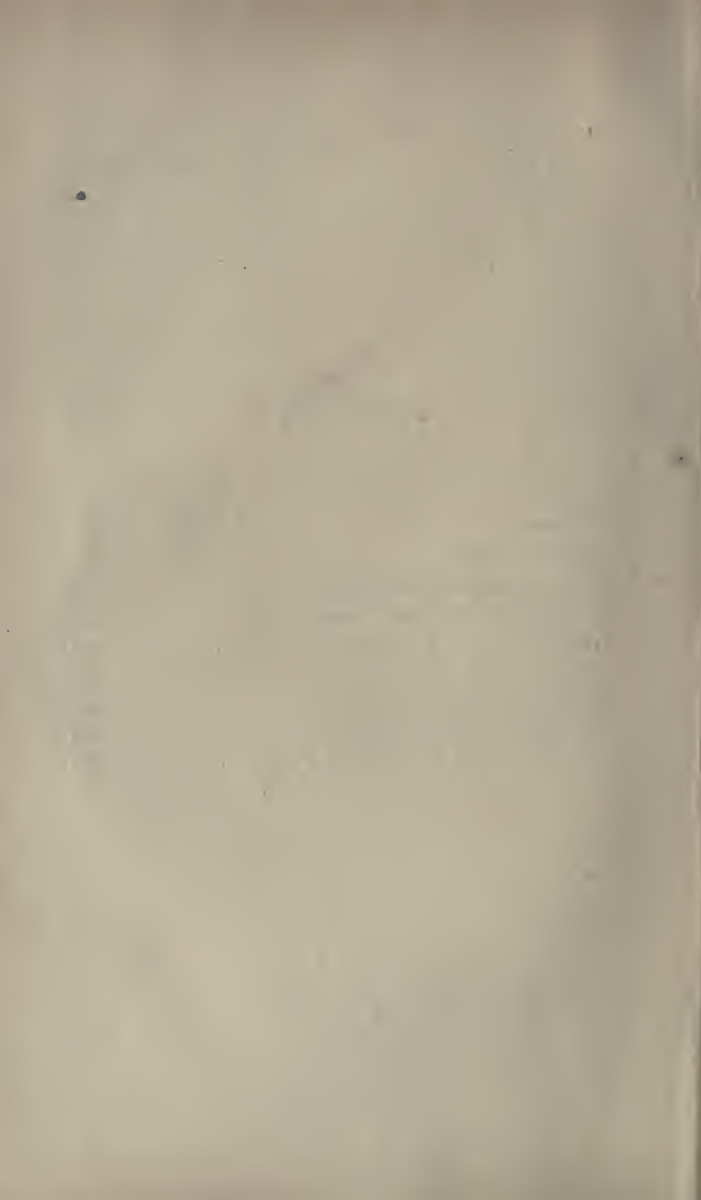
LONDON: THOMAS NELSON,
PATERNOSTER ROW.

MDCCCXLV.

CONTENTS.



	Page
1 PREFACE.	
2. LIFE OF BUNYAN.	
3 The Jerusalem Sinner Saved,	1
4. The Pharisee and the Publican,	93
5 The Trinity and a Christian,	245
6 The Law and a Christian,	251
7. Bunyan's Last Sermon,	257
8. Bunyan's Dying Sayings,	267
9 An Exhortation to Peace and Unity,	277

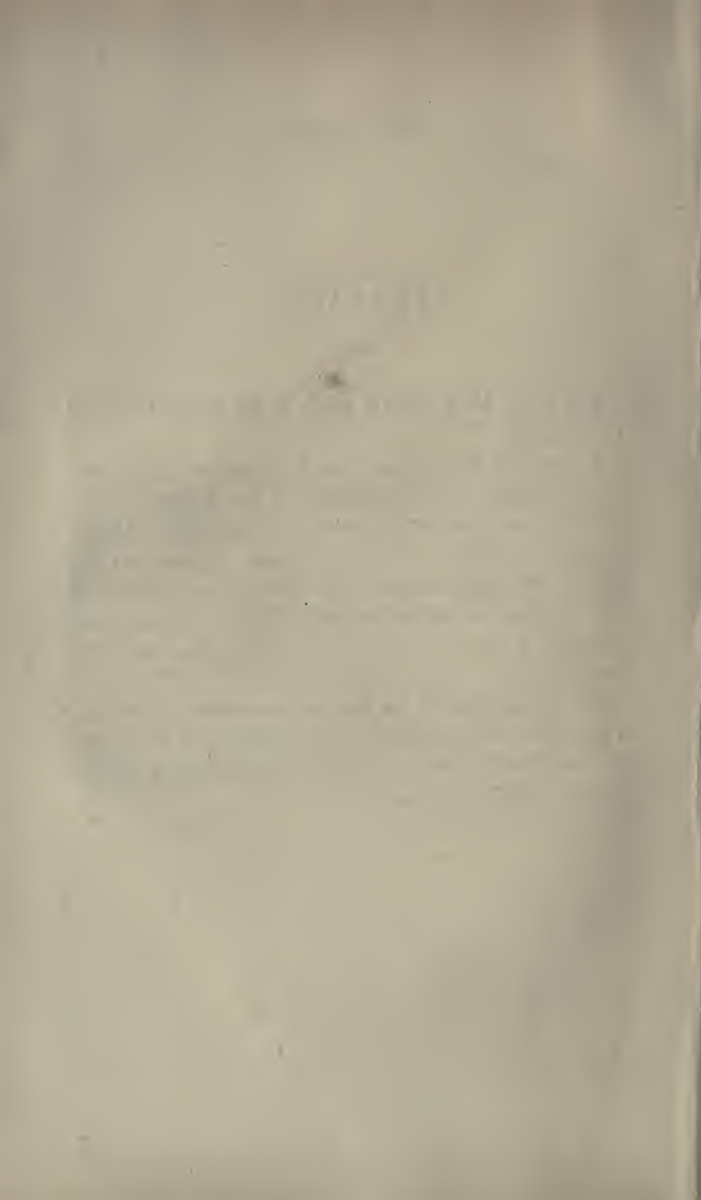


P R E F A C E.

THE Editor has but little to prefix to this volume by way of advertisement.

The works of BUNYAN are so well known, and so highly appreciated, as to render any commendation of them quite superfluous. Suffice it merely to state, that although his great fame is built on his genius as the *allegorist* of the Christian character and life, still, viewed more strictly as a *Theologian*, his works place him very high even among the Puritan Divines. In the works here printed, it is hoped that the reader will find justice done to his varied merits.

The utmost attention has been paid to secure complete accuracy in the text, by collating the best editions of his Works: and everything has been done to render the present, in all other respects, a faultless volume.



LIFE OF BUNYAN.

AFTER the pleasant sketches of pens so graceful as Southey's and Montgomery's ; after the elaborate biography of Mr Philip, whose researches have left few desiderata for any subsequent devotee ; indeed, after Bunyan's own graphic and characteristic narrative, the task on which we are now entering is one which, as we would have courted it the less, so we feel that we have peculiar facilities for performing it. Our main object is to give a simple and coherent account of a most unusual man—and then we should like to turn to some instructive purpose the peculiarities of his singular history, and no less singular works.

JOHN BUNYAN was born at Elstow, near Bedford, in 1628. His father was a brazier or tinker, and brought up his son as a craftsman of like occupation. There is no evidence for the gipsy origin of the house of Bunyan ; and though extremely poor, John's father gave his son such an education as poor men could then obtain for their children. He was sent to school and taught to read and write.

There has been some needless controversy regarding Bunyan's early days. Some have too readily taken for granted that he was in all respects a reprobate ; and others—the chief of whom is Dr Southey—have laboured to shew that there was little in the lad which any would censure, save the righteous overmuch. The truth is, that considering his rank of life, his conduct was not flagitious ; for he never was a drunkard, a libertine, or a lover of sanguinary sports : and the profanity and sabbath-breaking and heart-atheism which afterwards preyed on his awakened conscience, are unhappily too frequent to make their perpetrator conspicuous. The thing which gave Bunyan

any notoriety in the days of his ungodliness, and which made him afterwards appear to himself such a monster of iniquity, was the energy which he put into all his doings. He had a zeal for idle play, and an enthusiasm in mischief, which were the perverse manifestations of a forceful character, and which may have well entitled him to Southey's epithet—"a blackguard." The reader need not go far to see young Bunyan. Perhaps there is near your dwelling an Elstow—a quiet hamlet of some fifty houses sprinkled about in the picturesque confusion, and with the easy amplitude of space, which gives an old English village its look of leisure and longevity. And it is now verging to the close of the summer's day. The daws are taking short excursions from the steeple, and tamer fowls have gone home from the darkening and dewy green. But old Bunyan's donkey is still browsing there, and yonder is old Bunyan's self—the brawny tramper disspread on the settle, retailing to the more clownish residents tap-room wit and roadside news. However, it is young Bunyan you wish to see. Yonder he is, the noisiest of the party, playing pitch-and-toss—that one with the shaggy eyebrows, whose entire soul is ascending in the twirling penny—grim enough to be the blacksmith's apprentice, but his singed garments hanging round him with a lank and idle freedom which scorns indentures; his energetic movements and authoritative vociferations at once bespeaking the ragamuffin ringleader. The penny has come down with the wrong side uppermost, and the loud execration at once bewrays young Badman. You have only to remember that it is Sabbath evening, and you witness a scene often enacted on Elstow green two hundred years ago.

The strong depraving element in Bunyan's character was *ungodliness*. He walked according to the course of this world, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and conscious of his own rebellion, he said unto God, "Depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of thy ways." The only restraining influence of which he then felt the power, was terror. His days were often gloomy through forebodings of the wrath to come; and his nights were scared with visions, which the boisterous diversions and adventures of his waking-day could not always dispel. He would dream that the last day had come, and that the quaking earth was opening its mouth to let him down to hell; or he would find himself in the grasp of fiends, who were dragging him powerless away. And musing over these terrors of the night, yet feeling that

he could not abandon his sins, in his despair of heaven his anxious fancy would suggest to him all sorts of strange desires. He would wish that there had been no hell at all ; or that, if he must needs go thither, he might be a devil, "supposing, they were only tormentors, and I would rather be a tormentor than tormented myself."

These were the fears of his childhood. As he grew older, he grew harder. He experienced some remarkable providences, but they neither startled nor melted him. He once fell into the sea, and another time out of a boat into Bedford river, and either time had a narrow escape from drowning. One day in the field with a companion, an adder glided across their path. Bunyan's ready switch stunned it in a moment ; but with characteristic daring, he forced open the creature's mouth, and plucked out the sting—a foolhardiness which, as he himself observes, might, but for God's mercy, have brought him to his end. In the civil war he was "drawn" as a soldier to go to the siege of Leicester ; but when ready to set out, a comrade sought leave to take his place. Bunyan consented. His companion went to Leicester, and, standing sentry, was shot through the head, and died. These interpositions made no impression on him at the time.

He married very early : "And my mercy was to light upon a wife, whose father was counted godly. This woman and I, though we came together as poor as poor might be—not having so much household stuff as a dish or spoon betwixt us, yet this she had for her portion, 'The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven,' and 'The Practice of Piety,' which her father had left her when he died. In these two books I would sometimes read with her ; wherein I also found some things that were somewhat pleasing to me. She also would be often telling of me what a godly man her father was, and what a strict and holy life he lived in his days, both in word and deeds. Wherefore these books, with the relation, though they did not reach my heart to awaken it about my soul and sinful state, yet they did beget within me some desires to reform my vicious life, and fall in very eagerly with the religion of the times—to wit, to go to church twice a-day, and that, too, with the foremost ; and there should very devoutly both say and sing as others did, yet retaining my wicked life. But, withal, I was so overrun with the spirit of superstition, that I adored, and that with great devotion, even all things—the high-place, priest, clerk, vestment, service, and what else belonging to the

Church; counting all things holy that were therein contained, and especially the priest and clerk, most happy, and, without doubt, greatly blessed, because they were the servants, as I then thought, of God, and were principal in the temple to do his work therein."

So strong was this superstitious feeling—one shared by the ignorant peasantry in many portions of England, even at the present day—that "had he but seen a priest, though never so sordid and debauched in his life, his spirit would fall under him; and he could have lain down at their feet and been trampled upon by them—their name, their garb, and work, did so intoxicate and bewitch him." It little matters what form superstition takes—image-worship, priest-worship, or temple-worship; nothing is transforming except Christ in the heart, a Saviour realized, accepted, and enthroned. Whilst adoring the altar, and worshipping the surplice, and deifying the individual who wore it, Bunyan continued to curse and blaspheme, and spend his Sabbaths in the same riot as before.

One day, however, he heard a sermon on the sin of Sabbath-breaking. It fell heavy on his conscience; for it seemed all intended for him. It haunted him throughout the day, and when he went to his usual diversion in the afternoon, its cadence was still knelling in his troubled ear. He was busy at a game called "Cat," and had already struck the ball one blow, and was about to deal another, when "a voice darted from heaven into his soul, 'Wilt thou leave thy sins and go to heaven, or have thy sins and go to hell?'" His arm was arrested, and looking up to heaven, it seemed as if the Lord Jesus was looking down upon him in remonstrance and severe displeasure; and, at the same instant, the conviction flashed across him, that he had sinned so long that repentance was now too late. "My state is surely miserable—miserable if I leave my sins, and but miserable if I follow them. I can but be damned; and if I must be so, I had as good be damned for many sins as few." In the desperation of this awful conclusion he resumed the game; and so persuaded was he that heaven was for ever forfeited, that for some time after he made it his deliberate policy to enjoy the pleasures of sin as rapidly and intensely as possible.

To understand the foregoing incident, and some which may follow, the reader must remember that Bunyan was made up of vivid fancy and vehement emotion. He seldom believed; he

always felt and saw. And he could do nothing by halves. He threw a whole heart into his love and his hatred ; and when he rejoiced or trembled, the entire man and every movement was converted into ecstasy or horror. Many have experienced the dim counterpart of such processes as we are now describing ; but will scarcely recognise their own equivalent history in the bright realizations and agonizing vicissitudes of a mind so fervent and ideal.

For a month or more he went on in resolute sinning, only grudging that he could not get such scope as the madness of despair solicited, when one day standing at a neighbour's window, cursing and swearing, and "playing the madman, after his wonted manner," the woman of the house protested that he made her tremble, and that truly he was the ungodliest fellow for swearing that she ever heard in all her life, and quite enough to ruin the youth of the whole town. The woman was herself a notoriously worthless character ; and so severe a reproof, from so strange a quarter, had a singular effect on Bunyan's mind. He was in a moment silenced. He blushed before the God of heaven ; and as he there stood with hanging head, he wished with all his heart that he were a little child again, that his father might teach him to speak without profanity ; for he thought it so inveterate now, that reformation was out of the question. Nevertheless, so it was, from that instant onward he was cured of his wicked habit, and people wondered at the change.

"Quickly after this I fell into company with one poor man that made profession of religion ; who, as I then thought, did talk pleasantly of the Scriptures and of the matter of religion. Wherefore, falling into some love and liking of what he said, I betook me to my Bible, and began to take great pleasure in reading, but especially with the historical part thereof ; for as for Paul's Epistles, and such like Scriptures, I could not away with them, being as yet ignorant either of the corruption of my nature, or of the want and worth of Jesus Christ to save me. Wherefore I fell into some outward reformation, both in my words and life, and did set the commandments before me for my way to heaven ; which commandments I also did strive to keep, and, as I thought, did keep them pretty well sometimes, and then I should have comfort ; yet now and then should break one, and so afflict my conscience ; but then I should repent, and say I was sorry for it, and promise God to do better next time, and there got help

again ; for then I thought I pleased God as well as any man in England. Thus I continued about a year ; all which time our neighbours did take me to be a very godly man, a new and religious man, and did marvel much to see such great and famous alteration in my life and manners ; and indeed so it was, though I knew not Christ, nor grace, nor faith, nor hope ; for, as I have well since seen, had I then died, my state had been most fearful. But, I say, my neighbours were amazed at this my great conversion, from prodigious profaneness to something like a moral life ; and so they well might ; for this my conversion was as great as for Tom of Bedlam to become a sober man. Now, therefore, they began to speak well of me, both before my face and behind my back. Now I was, as they said, become godly ; now I was become a right honest man. But oh ! when I understood these were their words and opinions of me, it pleased me mighty well. For though, as yet, I was nothing but a poor painted hypocrite, yet I loved to be talked of as one that was truly godly. . . . And thus I continued for about a twelvemonth or more."

Though not acting from enlightened *motives*, Bunyan was now under the guidance of new *influences*. For just as the Spirit of God puts forth a restraining influence on many during the days of their carnality, which makes the change at their conversion less conspicuous than if they had been lifted from the depths of a flagitious reprobacy ; so others he long subjects to a preparatory process, during which some of the old and most offensive things of their ungodliness pass away ; and when the revolution, effected by the entrance of the evangelic motive, at last takes place, it is rather to personal consciousness than to outward observation that the change is perceptible. The real and final transformation is rather within the man than upon him. So was it with John Bunyan. One by one he abandoned his besetting sins, and made many concessions to conscience, while as yet he had not yielded his heart to the Saviour. It was slowly and regretfully, however, that he severed the "right hand." One of his principal amusements was one which he could not comfortably continue. It was *bell-ringing* ; by which he probably means the merry peals with which they used to desecrate their Sabbath evenings. It was only by degrees that he was able to abandon this favourite diversion. "What if one of the bells should fall ?" To provide against this contingency, he took his stand under a beam fastened across the tower. "But what if the falling bell should rebound from one of

the side walls, and hit me after all?" This thought sent him down stairs, and made him take his station, rope in hand, at the steeple door. "But what if the steeple itself should come down?" This thought banished him altogether, and he bade adieu to bell-ringing. And by a similar series of concessions, eventually, but with longer delay, he gave up another practice, for which his conscience checked him—dancing. All these improvements in his conduct were a source of much complacency to himself, though all this while he wanted the soul-emancipating and sin-subduing knowledge of Jesus Christ. The Son had not made him free.

There is such a thing as cant. It is possible for flippant pretenders to acquire a peculiar phraseology, and use it with a painful dexterity; and it is also possible for genuine Christians to subside into a state of mind so listless or secular, that their talk on religious topics will have the inane and heartless sound of the tinkling cymbal. But as there is an experimental religion, so is it possible for those who have felt religion in its vitality to exchange their thoughts regarding it, and to relate what it—or rather, God in it—has done for them. There are few things which indicate a healthier state of personal piety than such a frank and full-hearted Christian intercourse. It was a specimen of such communings which impressed on the mind of Bunyan the need of something beyond an outside reformation. He had gone to Bedford in prosecution of his calling, when, passing along the street, he noticed a few poor women sitting in a door-way, and talking together. He drew near to listen to their discourse. It surprised him; for though he had by this time become a great talker on sacred subjects, their themes were far beyond his reach. God's work in their souls, the views they had obtained of their natural misery and of God's love in Christ Jesus, what words and promises had particularly refreshed them and strengthened them against the temptations of Satan; it was of matters so personal and vital that they spake to one another. "And methought they spake as if you had made them speak; they spake with such pleasantness of Scripture language, and with such appearance of grace in all they said, that they were to me as if they had found a new world—as if they were 'people that dwelt alone, and were not to be reckoned among their neighbours!'"

The conversation of these poor people made a deep impression on Bunyan's mind. He saw that there was something in real religion into which he had not yet penetrated. He sought the society

of these humble instructors, and learned from them much that he had not known before. He began to read the Bible with new avidity ; and that portion which had formerly been most distasteful, the Epistles of Paul, now became the subject of his special study. A sect of Antinomians, who boasted that they could do whatsoever they pleased without sinning, now fell in his way. Professors of religion were rapidly embracing their opinions, and there was something in their wild fervour and apparent raptures, prepossessing to the ardent mind of Bunyan. He read their books, and pondered their principles ; but prefaced his examination with the simple prayer,—“ O Lord, I am a fool, and not able to know the truth from error. Lord, leave me not to my own blindness. If this doctrine be of God, let me not despise it ; if it be of the devil, let me not embrace it. Lord, in this matter I lay my soul only at thy foot : let me not be deceived, I humbly beseech thee.” His prayer was heard, and he was saved from this snare of the devil.

The object to which the eye of an inquiring sinner should be turned, is CHRIST—the finished work and the sufficient Saviour. But, in point of fact, the chief stress of the more evangelical instruction has usually been laid on FAITH—on that act of the mind which unites the soul to the Saviour, and makes salvation personal ; and it is only by studying faith that many have come at last to an indirect and circuitous acquaintance with Christ. By some such misdirection Bunyan was misled. In quest of faith he went a long and joyless journey, and was wearied with the greatness of his way. It was secretly urged upon his mind, that if he had faith he would be able to work miracles ; and passages of Scripture were borne in upon his mind, which bespoke the omnipotence of faith. One day, on the road from Elstow to Bedford, it was suggested to his mind to try some miracle, and that miracle should be, “ to say to the puddles which were in the horse-pads, ‘ Be dry,’ and to the dry places, ‘ Be you puddles.’ ” However, before doing this, he thought he should go over the hedge and pray for faith, and then come and speak the word. “ But what if, after you have prayed and tried to do it, nothing happens ? ” The dread of this alternative made him postpone the anxious experiment, and left him still in doubt.

Then he had a sort of waking vision, suggested by what he had seen in his pious friends at Bedford. “ I saw as if they were on the sunny side of some high mountain, there refreshing themselves

with the pleasant beams of the sun, while I was shivering and shrinking in the cold, afflicted with frost, snow, and dark clouds. Methought also, betwixt me and them, I saw a wall that did compass about this mountain ; now through this wall my soul did greatly desire to pass, concluding that if I could, I would even go into the very midst of them, and there also comfort myself with the heat of their sun. About this wall I thought myself to go again and again, still prying as I went, to see if I could find some gap or passage to enter therein. But none could I find for some time. At the last I saw, as it were, a narrow gap, like a little doorway in the wall, through which I attempted to pass. Now, the passage being very strait and narrow, I made many offers to get in, but all in vain, even until I was wellnigh quite beat out, by striving to get in. At last, with great striving, methought I at first did get in my head, and after that, by a sideling striving, my shoulders and my whole body.* Then was I exceedingly glad ; went and sat down in the midst of them, and so was comforted with the light and heat of their sun. Now, this mountain and wall were thus made out to me : The mountain signified the church of the living God ; the sun that shone thereon, the comfortable shining of his merciful face on them that were therein : the wall, I thought, was the world, that did make separation between the Christians and the world ; and the gap which was in the wall, I thought was Jesus Christ, who is the way to God the Father. But forasmuch as the passage was wonderful narrow, even so narrow that I could not, but with great difficulty, enter in thereat, it shewed me that none could enter into life but those that were in downright earnest, and unless they left that wicked world behind them ; for here was only room for body and soul, but not for body and soul and sin." The dream did him good, for, though it brought him no absolute assurance, it inspirited his efforts after it.

There is scarcely a fear which can assail an inquiring spirit which did not at some stage of his progress arrest the mind of Bunyan. At one time he was afflicted by an erroneous view of the doctrine of election. Looking at them from the outer and under side, those purposes of everlasting love which secure their safety who have already got within the precincts of salvation, ap-

* Those who are interested in the historic parallels supplied by Christian biography will find a similar instructive dream in the *Life of General Burn*, vol. i. pp. 127-130.

peared bristling and forbidding—a frowning *chevaux de frise*, rather than a fence of protection and preservation. And when somewhat relieved from this perplexity, he fell into another. He feared that the day of grace was gone ; and so impressed on his mind was this mournful conviction, that he could do little else than upbraid his own infatuation for allowing the one propitious season to pass for ever away. But the words, “Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled ;” and those others, “And yet there is room,” brought him relief. Then, again, he saw that the call of Christ was needful to make a man a disciple; and he feared that he should never get that call. “But oh ! how I now loved those words that spake of a Christian’s calling ! as when the Lord said to one, Follow me ; and to another, Come after me : and oh ! thought I, that he would say so to me too : how gladly would I run after him ! How lovely now was every one in my eyes, that I thought to be converted, whether man or woman ! They shone, they walked like a people that carried the broad seal of heaven upon them. Oh ! I saw the lot was fallen to them in pleasant places, and they had a goodly heritage. But that which made me sick, was that of Christ,—‘He went up into a mountain, and called to him whom he would, and they came unto him.’ This Scripture made me faint and fear, yet it kindled fire in my soul. That which made me fear was this : lest Christ should have no liking to me, for he called whom he would. But oh ! the glory that I saw in that condition did still so engage my heart, that I could seldom read of any that Christ did call but I presently wished, ‘Would I had been in their clothes ! would I had been born Peter ! would I had been born John ! or, would I had been by, and had heard him when he called them, how would I have cried, O Lord, call me also. But oh ! I feared he would not call me.’ ”

There was at that time a minister in Bedford whose history was almost as remarkable as Bunyan’s own. His name was Gifford. He had been a staunch royalist, and concerned in the rising in Kent. He was arrested, and, with eleven of his comrades, was doomed to die. The night before the day fixed for his execution his sister came to visit him. She found the guard asleep, and, with her assistance, the prisoner effected his escape. For three days he was hid in a field, in the bottom of a deep ditch ; but at last he contrived to get away to a place of safety in the neighbourhood of Bedford. Being there a perfect stranger,

he ventured on the practice of physic ; but he was still abandoned to reckless habits and outrageous vice. One evening he lost a large sum of money at the gaming-table, and in the fierceness of his chagrin his mind was filled with the most desperate thoughts of the providence of God. In his vexation he snatched up a book. It was a volume of Bolton, a solemn and forceful writer then well known. A sentence in this book so fixed on his conscience that for many weeks he could get no rest in his spirit. When at last he found forgiveness through the blood of Christ, his joy was extreme, and, except for two days before his death, he never lost the comfortable persuasion of God's love. For some time the few pious individuals in that neighbourhood would not believe that such a reprobate was really converted ; but, nothing daunted by their distrust, like his prototype of Tarsus, he began to preach the Word with boldness, and, endowed with a vigorous mind and a fervent spirit, remarkable success attended his ministry. A little church was formed, and he was invited to become its pastor ; and there he continued till he died.* It was to this Mr Gifford that Bunyan was at this time introduced ; and though the conversations of this " Evangelist" brought him no immediate comfort, it was well for him to enjoy the friendship and sympathy of one whose own views were so clear and happy.

It is instructive to find, that, amid all the depression of these anxious days, it was not any one sin, nor any particular class of sins, which made him so fearful and unhappy. He felt that he was a sinner, and as a sinner he wanted a perfect righteousness to present him faultless before God. This righteousness, he also knew, was nowhere to be found except in the person of Jesus Christ. " My original and inward pollution,—that was my plague and affliction. *That* I saw at a dreadful rate, always putting forth itself within me,—that I had the guilt of to amazement ; by reason of that I was more loathsome in mine own eyes than a toad ; and I thought I was so in God's eyes too. Sin and corruption, I said, would as naturally bubble out of my heart as water would out of a fountain. I thought now that every one had a better heart than I had. I could have changed hearts with any body. I thought none but the devil himself could equalize me for inward wickedness and pollution of mind. I fell, therefore, at the sight of my own vileness, deeply into despair ; for I concluded that this

* Ivikey's Life of Bunyan, pp. 51-53.

condition that I was in could not stand with a state of grace. Sure, thought I, I am forsaken of God ; sure I am given up to the devil and a reprobate mind. And thus I continued a long while, even for some years together."

During these painful apprehensions regarding his own state, it is no marvel that he looked on secular things with an apathetic eye. " While thus afflicted with the fears of my own damnation, there were two things would make me wonder : the one was, when I saw old people hunting after the things of this life, as if they should live here always ; the other was, when I found professors much distressed and cast down when they met with outward losses, as of husband, wife, child, &c. Lord, thought I, what a-do is here about such little things as these ! What seeking after carnal things by some, and what grief in others for the loss of them ! If they so much labour after, and shed so many tears for the things of this present life, how am I to be bemoaned, pitied, and prayed for ! My soul is dying, my soul is damning. Were my soul but in a good condition, and were I but sure of it, ah ! how rich would I esteem myself, though blessed but with bread and water ! I should count those but small afflictions, and bear them as little burdens. A wounded spirit who can bear ?"

This long interval of gloom was at last relieved by a brief sun-burst of joy. He heard a sermon on the text, " Behold, thou art fair, my love ;" in which the preacher said, that a ransomed soul is precious to the Saviour, even when it appears very worthless to itself,—that Christ loves it when tempted, assaulted, afflicted, and mourning under the hiding of God's countenance. Bunyan went home musing on the words, till the truth of what the preacher said began to force itself upon his mind ; and half incredulous at first, a hesitating hope dawned in upon his spirit. " Then I began to give place to the word, which, with power, did over and over make this joyful sound within my soul—" Thou art my love, thou art my love ; and nothing shall separate thee from my love." And with that my heart was filled full of comfort and hope ; and now I could believe that my sins should be forgiven me : yea, I was now so taken with the love and mercy of God, that I remember I could not tell how to contain till I got home. I thought I could have spoken of his love, and have told of his mercy to me, even to the very crows that sat upon the ploughed lands before me, had they been capable to have understood me. Wherefore, I said in my soul, with much gladness, Well, I would I had pen

and ink here. I would write this down before I go any farther ; for surely I will not forget this forty years hence."

However, as he himself remarks, in less than forty days he had forgotten it all. A flood of new and fierce temptations broke over him, and had it not been for a strong sustaining arm which unseen upheld him, his soul must have sunk in the deep and angry waters. At one time he was almost overwhelmed in a hurricane of blasphemous suggestions, and at another time his faith had wellnigh made shipwreck on the shoals of infidelity or deliberate atheism. But the very reluctance and dismay of his spirit shewed that a new nature was in him. "I often, when these temptations have been with force upon me, did compare myself to the case of such a child whom some gipsy hath by force took up in her arms, and is carrying from friend and country ; kick sometimes I did, and also shriek and cry ; but yet I was bound in the wings of the temptation, and the wind would carry me away." It was all that he could do to refrain from articulating such words as he imagined would amount to the sin against the Holy Ghost ; and for a year together he was haunted with such diabolical suggestions that he was weary of his life, and fain would have changed condition with a horse or a dog. During this dreary term it is no wonder that his heart felt hard. "Though he should have given a thousand pounds for a tear, he could not shed one ; and often he had not even the desire to shed one." Every ordinance was an affliction. He could not listen to a sermon, or take up a religious book, but a crowd of wild and horrid fancies rushed in betwixt the subject and his bewildered mind. He could not assume the attitude of prayer but he felt impelled to break off, almost as if some one had been pulling him away ; or, to mar his devotion, some ridiculous object was sure to be presented to his fancy. It is not surprising that he should have concluded that he was possessed by the devil ; and it is scarcely possible to peruse his own and similar recitals without the forcible conviction that they are more than the mere workings of the mind, either in its sane or its disordered state.

Only relieved by some glimpses of comfort, "which, like Peter's sheet, were of a sudden caught up from him into heaven again," this horrible darkness lasted no less than a year. The light which first stole in upon it, and in which it finally melted away, was a clear discovery of the person of Christ, more especially a distinct perception of the dispositions which he mani-

fested while here on earth. And one thing greatly helped him. He alighted on a congenial mind, and an experience almost identical with his own. From the emancipation which this new acquaintance gave to his spirit, as well as the tone which he imparted to Bunyan's theology, we had best relate the incident in his own words. "Before I had got thus far out of my temptations, I did greatly long to see some ancient godly man's experience, who had writ some hundreds of years before I was born ; for those who had writ in our days, I thought (but I desire them now to pardon me) that they had writ only that which others felt ; or else had, through the strength of their wits and parts, studied to answer such objections as they perceived others perplexed with, without going down themselves into the deep. Well, after many such longings in my mind, the God in whose hands are all our days and ways, did cast into my hands one day a book of Martin Luther's : it was his Comment on the Galatians ; it also was so old that it was ready to fall piece from piece if I did but turn it over. Now I was pleased much that such an old book had fallen into my hands ; the which, when I had but a little way perused, I found my condition in his experience so largely and profoundly handled, as if his book had been written out of my heart. This made me marvel : for thus, thought I, this man could not know anything of the state of Christians now, but must needs write and speak the experience of former days. Besides, he doth most gravely also, in that book, debate of the sin of these temptations, namely, blasphemy, desperation, and the like ; shewing that the law of Moses, as well as the devil, death, and hell, hath a very great hand therein : the which, at first, was very strange to me ; but considering and watching, I found it so indeed. But of particulars here I intend nothing ; only this, methinks, I must let fall before all men, I do prefer this book of Martin Luther upon the Galatians—excepting the Holy Bible—before all the books that ever I have seen, as most fit for a wounded conscience."

There was one thing of which Bunyan was very conscious—that his extrication from the fearful pit was the work of an almighty hand. The transition was very blissful ; but just because his present views were so bright and assuring, he knew that flesh and blood had not revealed them. "Now I had an evidence, as I thought, of my salvation from heaven, with many golden seals thereon, all hanging in my sight. Now could I remember this manifestation and the other discovery of grace with comfort, and

should often long and desire that the last day were come, that I might be for ever inflamed with the sight and joy and communion with him, whose head was crowned with thorns, whose face was spit on and body broken, and soul made an offering for my sins : for, whereas before-I lay continually trembling at the mouth of hell, now methought I was got so far therefrom, that I could not, when I looked back, scarce discern it. And oh ! thought I, that I were fourscore years old now, that I might die quickly, that my soul might be gone to rest." "And now I found, as I thought, that I loved Christ dearly. Oh ! methought that my soul cleaved unto him, my affections cleaved unto him. I felt love to him as hot as fire ; and now, as Job said, I thought I should die in my nest."

Another period of fearful agony, however, awaited him, and, like the last, it continued for a year. In perusing his own recital of these terrible conflicts, the first relief to our tortured sympathy is in the recollection that it is all over now, and that the sufferer, escaped from his great tribulation, is long ago before the throne. But in the calmer, because remoter, contemplation of this fiery trial, it is easy to see "the end of the Lord." When He permitted Satan to tempt his servant Job, it was not for Job's sake merely, nor for the sake of the blessed contrast which surprised his latter days, that he allowed such thick-coming woes to gather round the patriarch ; but it was to provide in his parallel experience a storehouse of encouragement and hope for the future children of sorrow. And when the Lord permitted the adversary so violently to assail our worthy, and when he caused so many of his own waves and billows to pass over him, it was not merely for the sake of Bunyan ; it was for the sake of Bunyan's readers down to the end of time. By selecting this strong spirit as the subject of these trials, the Lord provided, in his intense feelings and vivid realizations, a normal type—a glaring instance of those experiences which, in their fainter modifications, are common to most Christians ; and, through his graphic pen, secured a guide-book for Zion's pilgrims in ages yet to come. In the temptations we are now called to record, there is something so peculiar, that we do not know if Christian biography supplies any exact counterpart ; but the time and manner of its occurrence have many and painful parallels. It was after he had entered into "rest"—when he had received joyful assurance of his admission into God's family, and was desiring to depart and be with Christ

—it was then that this assault was made on his constancy, and it was a fiercer assault than any. If we do not greatly err, it is not uncommon for believers to be visited after conversion with temptations from which they were exempt in the days of their ignorance ; as well as temptations which, but for their conversion, could not have existed.

The temptation to which we have alluded, took this strange and dreadful form—to sell and part with his Saviour, to exchange him for the things of this life—for anything. This horrid thought he could not shake out of his mind, day nor night, for many months together. It intermixed itself with every occupation, however sacred, or however trivial. “He could not eat his food, stoop for a pin, chop a stick, nor cast his eye to look on this or that, but still the temptation would come, ‘Sell Christ for this, sell Christ for that, sell him, sell him.’ Sometimes it would run in my thoughts not so little as a hundred times together, Sell him, sell him, sell him: Against which, I may say, for whole hours together, I have been forced to stand as continually leaning and forcing my spirit against it ; lest haply, before I was aware, some wicked thought might arise in my heart that might consent thereto : and sometimes the tempter would make me believe I had consented to it ; but then should I be as tortured on a rack for whole days together.”—“But, to be brief, one morning as I did lie in my bed, I was, as at other times, most fiercely assaulted with this temptation to sell and part with Christ—the wicked suggestion still running in my mind, Sell him, sell him, sell him, sell him, as fast as a man could speak, against which I also, as at other times, answered, No, no ; not for thousands, thousands, thousands, at least twenty times together. But at last, after much striving, even until I was almost out of breath, I felt this thought pass through my heart, Let him go, if he will ; and I thought also that I felt my heart freely consent thereto. Oh, the diligence of Satan ! Oh, the desperateness of man’s heart ! Now was the battle won, and down fell I, as a bird that is shot from the top of a tree, into great guilt and fearful despair. Thus getting out of my bed, I went moping into the field, but, God knows, with as heavy a heart as mortal man, I think, could bear. Where, for the space of two hours, I was like a man bereft of life, and as now past all recovery, and bound over to eternal punishment. And withal, that scripture did seize upon my soul, ‘O profane person, as Esau, who, for one

morsel of meat, sold his birth-right; for ye know how that afterwards, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.' These words were to my soul like fetters of brass, in the continual sound of which I went for several months together."

The anxious casuistry in which he sought relief, and the alternation of wistful hope and blank despair, in which for many a dismal day he was tossed to and fro, none but himself can properly describe. They are deeply affecting, and to some may prove instructive.

"Then began I, with sad and careful heart, to consider of the nature and largeness of my sin, and to search into the word of God, if in any place I could espy a word of promise, or any encouraging sentence by which I might take relief. Wherefore I began to consider that of Mark iii., 'All manner of sins and blasphemies shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, wherewith soever they shall blaspheme:' which place, methought, at a blush, did contain a large and glorious promise for the pardon of high offences. But considering the place more fully, I thought it was rather to be understood as relating more chiefly to those who had, while in a natural state, committed such things as there are mentioned; but not to me, who had not only received light and mercy, but that had, both after and also contrary to that, so slighted Christ as I had done. I feared, therefore, that this wicked sin of mine might be that sin unpardonable, of which he there thus speaketh, 'But he that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation.'

"And now was I both a burden and a terror to myself; nor did I ever so know as now what it was to be weary of my life and yet afraid to die. O how gladly would I have been anybody but myself! anything but a man! and in any condition but my own! for there was nothing did pass more frequently over my mind, than that it was impossible for me to be forgiven my transgression, and to be saved from wrath to come."

He set himself to compare his sin with that of David and Peter, but saw that there were specialties in his guilt which made it far greater. The only case which he could compare to his own was that of Judas.

"About this time I did light on the dreadful story of that mi-

serable mortal, Francis Spira. Every sentence in that book, every groan of that man, with all the rest of his actions in his dolors, as his tears, his prayers, his gnashing of teeth, his wringing of hands, his twisting, and languishing, and pining away, under the mighty hand of God that was upon him, was as knives and daggers to my soul; especially that sentence of his was frightful to me, 'Man knows the beginning of sin, but who bounds the issues thereof?' Then would the former sentence, as the conclusion of all, fall like a hot thunderbolt again upon my conscience, 'For you know how, that afterwards, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.' Then should I be struck into a very great trembling, insomuch that at sometimes I could, for whole days together, feel my very body, as well as my mind, to shake and totter under the sense of this dreadful judgment of God.

"Now I should find my mind to flee from God as from the face of a dreadful judge; yet this was my torment, I could not escape his hand. 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.' But blessed be his grace, that scripture in these flying fits would call as running after me,—'I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins; return unto me, for I have redeemed thee.' This, I say, would come in upon my mind when I was fleeing from the face of God; for I did flee from his face, that is, my mind and spirit fled before him: by reason of his highness I could not endure. Then would that text cry, Return unto me; it would cry aloud, with a very great voice, Return unto me, for I have redeemed thee. Indeed this would make me make a little stop, and, as it were, look over my shoulder behind me, to see if I could discern that the God of grace did follow me with a pardon in his hand.

"Once as I was walking to and fro in a good man's shop, bemoaning of myself in my sad and doleful state, afflicting myself with self-abhorrence for this wicked and ungodly thought; lamenting also this hard hap of mine, for that I should commit so great a sin, greatly fearing I should not be pardoned; praying also in my heart, that if this sin of mine did differ from that against the Holy Ghost, the Lord would shew it me; and being now ready to sink with fear, suddenly there was as if there had rushed in at the window the noise of wind upon me, but very pleasant, and as if I heard a voice speaking,—'Didst ever refuse

to be justified by the blood of Christ?' And withal my whole life of profession past was in a moment opened to me, wherein I was made to see that designedly I had not ; so my heart answered groaningly, No. Then fell with power that word of God upon me, See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. This made a strange seizure upon my spirit : it brought light with it, and commanded a silence in my heart of all those tumultuous thoughts that before did rise, like masterless hell-hounds, to roar and bel-low, and make a hideous noise within me. It shewed me also that Jesus Christ had yet a word of grace and mercy for me ; that he had not, as I feared, quite forsaken and cast off my soul : Yea, this was a kind of check for my proneness to desperation ; a kind of threatening of me if I did not, notwithstanding my sins and the heinousness of them, venture my salvation upon the Son of God. But as to my determining about this strange dispensation, what it was, I know not. I have not yet in twenty years' time been able to make a judgment of it. I thought then what here I should be loath to speak. But verily, that sudden rushing wind was as if an angel had come upon me ; but both it and the salvation, I will leave until the day of judgment. Only this I say, it commanded a great calm in my soul. It persuaded me there might be hope ; it shewed me, as I thought, what the sin unpardonable was, and that my soul had yet the blessed privilege to flee to Jesus Christ for mercy. But I say concerning this dispensation, I know not what yet to say unto it. I leave it to be thought on by men of sound judgment. I lay not the stress of my salvation thereupon, but upon the Lord Jesus in the promise ; yet seeing I am here unfolding of my secret things, I thought it might not be altogether inexpedient to let this also shew itself, though I cannot now relate the matter as then I did experience it. This lasted in the savour thereof about three or four days, and then I began to mistrust and despair again."

No solid peace can enter the soul except that which is brought by the Comforter. It is not the word read and heard, but the word revealed by the Spirit, which is saving and assuring. There is undoubtedly a divine operation on the mind wherever any special impression is produced by the truths of God ; and whether that impression should be made with audible and visible manifestations accompanying it—as on the day of Pentecost—or should be so vivid as to convert a mental perception into a bodily sensation. as we are disposed to think was the case

with some of the remarkable sights and heavenly voices which good men have recorded, is really of little moment. In Bunyan's case, so warm was his imagination, that every clear perception was sure to be instantaneously sounding in his ear, or standing out a bright vision before his admiring eyes. This feature of his mental conformation has been noticed already ; but this may be the proper place to allude to it again.

After the short breathing time we just noticed, Bunyan began to sink in the deep waters again. It was in vain that he asked the prayers of God's people, and equally in vain that he imparted his grief to those who had passed through the same conflicts with the devil. One "ancient Christian," to whom he stated his fear that he had committed the sin for which there is no forgiveness, thought so too. "Thus was I always sinking, whatever I did think or do. So one day I walked to a neighbouring town, and sat down upon a settle in the street, and fell into a very deep panic about the most fearful state my sin had brought me to ; and after long musing, I lifted up my head ; but methought I saw as if the sun that shineth in the heavens did grudge to give light ; and as if the very stones in the street, and tiles upon the houses, did bend themselves against me : methought that they all combined together to banish me out of the world ; I was abhorred of them, and unfit to dwell among them, or be partaker of their benefits, because I had sinned against the Saviour. Then breaking out in the bitterness of my soul, I said to my soul, with a grievous sigh, 'How can God comfort such a wretch as I am ?' I had no sooner said it, but this returned upon me, as an echo doth answer a voice, 'This sin is not unto death.' At which I was as if raised out of the grave, and cried out again, 'Lord, how couldst thou find out such a word as this ?' for I was filled with admiration at the fitness and at the unexpectedness of the sentence. The fitness of the word ; the rightness of the timing of it ; the power and sweetness and light and glory that came with it also, were marvellous to me to find. I was now for the time out of doubt as to that about which I was so much in doubt before. I seemed now to stand upon the same ground with other sinners, and to have as good right to the word and prayer as any of them."

In coming to this conclusion, he had made a great step in advance. His misery had hitherto been occasioned by a device of the devil, which keeps many anxious souls from comfort. He regarded his own case as a special exception to which a gospel, other-

wise general, did not apply ; but this snare was now broken, and, though with halting pace, he was on the way to settled rest and joy. Frequently he would feel that his transgressions had cut him off from Christ, and left him "neither foot-hold nor hand-hold among all the props and stays in the precious word of life ;" but presently he would find some gracious assurance—he knew not how—sustaining him. At one time he would appear to himself like a child fallen into a mill-pond, "who thought it could make some shift to sprawl and scramble in the water," yet, as it could find nothing to which to cling, must sink at last ; but by and by he would perceive that an unseen power was buoying him up, and encouraging him to cry from the depths. At another time he would be so discouraged and daunted, that he scarcely dared to pray, and yet in a sort of desperation beginning, he found it true that "men ought always to pray and not to faint." On one occasion, whilst endeavouring to draw near the throne of grace, the tempter suggested "that neither the mercy of God, nor yet the blood of Christ, at all concerned him, nor could they help him by reason of his sin ; therefore it was vain to pray." Yet he thought with himself, "I will pray." "But," said the tempter, "your sin is unpardonable." "Well," said he, "I will pray." "It is to no boot," said the adversary. And still he answered, "I will pray." And so he began his prayer, "Lord, Satan tells me that neither thy mercy, nor Christ's blood, is sufficient to save my soul. Lord, shall I honour thee most by believing thou wilt and canst ? or him, by believing thou neither wilt nor canst ? Lord, I would fain honour thee by believing thou canst and thou willest." And whilst he was thus speaking, "as if some one had clapped him on the back," that scripture fastened on his mind, "O man great is thy faith."

Relief came slowly but steadily, and was the more abiding, because he had learned by experience to distrust any comfort which did not come from the word of God. Such passages as these, "My grace is sufficient for thee," and "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out," greatly lightened his burden ; but he derived still stronger encouragement from considering that the Gospel, with its benignity, is much more expressive of the mind and disposition of God than the law with its severity. "Mercy rejoiceth over judgment. How shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious ? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious, had no

glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth." Or, as the same truth presented itself to his mind in an aspect more arresting to a mind like his, "And Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here ; and let us make three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. For he wist not what to say, for he was sore afraid. And there was a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son, hear him." "Then I saw that Moses and Elias must both vanish, and leave Christ and his saints alone."

We have now arrived at the happy time when these doubts and distractions were exchanged for songs of deliverance. We relate it in the words of Bunyan's own narrative :—"One day as I was passing into the field, and that too with some dashes on my conscience, fearing lest yet all was not right, suddenly this sentence fell upon my soul, 'Thy righteousness is in heaven ;' and methought withal, I saw with the eyes of my soul, Jesus Christ at God's right hand ; there, I say, was my righteousness ; so that wherever I was, or whatever I was doing, God could not say of me, 'He wants my righteousness,' for that was just before him. I also saw, moreover, that it was not my good frame of heart that made my righteousness better, nor my bad frame that made my righteousness worse ; for my righteousness was Jesus Christ himself, 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.' Now did my chains fall off my legs indeed ; I was loosed from my afflictions and my irons ; my temptations also fled away ; so that from that time those dreadful scriptures of God left off to trouble me. Now went I also home rejoicing for the grace and love of God ; so when I came home I looked to see if I could find that sentence, 'Thy righteousness is in heaven,' but could not find such a saying ; wherefore my heart began to sink again, only that was brought to my remembrance, 'He is made unto us of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption ;' by this word I saw the other sentence true. For, by this scripture, I saw that the man Christ Jesus, as he is distinct from us as touching his bodily presence, so he is our righteousness and sanctification before God. Here, therefore, I lived for some time very sweetly at peace with God through Christ. Oh ! methought, Christ, Christ ! There was nothing but Christ that was before my eyes. I was not now for looking upon this and the other benefits of Christ apart, as of his blood, burial, or resur-

rection, but considering him as a whole Christ, as he is when all these, and all other his virtues, relations, offices, and operations met together, and that he sat on the right hand of God in heaven. 'Twas glorious to me to see his exaltation, and the worth and pre-
valency of all his benefits ; and that because now I could look from myself to him, and would reckon that all those graces of God that now were green on me, were yet but like those cracked groats and fourpence-halfpennies that rich men carry in their purses, when their gold is in their trunks at home : Oh ! I saw my gold was in my trunk at home ! in Christ my Lord and Saviour. Now Christ was all ; all my *righteousness*, all my *sanctification*, and all my *redemption*.

“ Further, the Lord did also lead me into the mystery of union with the Son of God ; that I was joined to him, that I was ‘ flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone’ (Eph. v. 30) ; and now was that word of St Paul sweet to me. By this also was my faith in him as my righteousness the more confirmed in me ; for if he and I were one, then his righteousness was mine, his merits mine, his victory also mine. Now could I see myself in heaven and earth at once : in heaven by my Christ, by my head, by my righteousness and life ; though on earth by my body or person. Now I saw Christ Jesus was looked upon of God, and should also be looked upon by us, as that common or public person, in whom all the whole body of his elect are always to be considered and reckoned ; that we fulfilled the law by him, rose from the dead by him, got the victory over sin, death, the devil, and hell by him ; when he died, we died ; and so of his resurrection. ‘ Thy dead men shall live ; together with my dead body shall they arise,’ saith he : and again, ‘ After two days he will revive us, and the third day we shall live in his sight :’ which is now fulfilled by the sitting down of the Son of Man on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, according to that to the Ephesians, ‘ He hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.’ Ah ! these blessed considerations and scriptures, with many others of like nature, were in those days made to spangle in mine eye, so that I have cause to say, ‘ Praise ye the Lord God in his sanctuary ; praise him in the firmament of his power ; praise him for his mighty acts : praise him according to his excellent greatness.’ ”

Extricated from the Slough of Despond, Bunyan went on his way rejoicing ; and though sometimes interrupted by disquieting

thoughts and strong temptations, his subsequent career was a path of growing comfort and prevailing peace. At the age of twenty-six he was admitted a member of that Baptist church of which Mr Gifford was the faithful pastor,—a rare man, who, in angry times, and in a small communion, preserved his catholicity. Holding that “union with Christ,” and not agreement concerning any ordinances or things external, is the foundation of Christian fellowship, with his dying hand he addressed a letter to his beloved people, in which the following sentence occurs, the utterance of a heart enlarged by Christian magnanimity, and bent on those objects which alone look important when the believer is waiting on the top of Pisgah:—“Concerning separation from the Church about baptism, laying on of hands, anointing with oil, psalms, or any other externals, I charge every one of you respectively, as you will give an account of it to our Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge both quick and dead at his coming, that none of you be found guilty of this great evil, which some have committed, and that through a zeal for God, yet not according to knowledge. They have erred from the law of the love of Christ, and have made a rent in the true Church, which is but one.” If our Baptist brethren are justly proud that the burning and shining light of Bunyan was set upon their candlestick, they have equal reason to boast of the torch at which his bland and diffusive light was kindled. John Bunyan doubtless owed to John Gifford the peculiar type of his Christianity, its comprehensiveness, and its sect-forgetting zeal for the things of Jesus Christ.

He had not long been a member of the church when he was called to exercise its actual ministry. Gifford was gone to his everlasting rest; and as a substitute for his labours, it was put upon a few of the brethren to speak the word of exhortation to the rest. Of these Bunyan was one. At first he did not venture farther than to address his friends in their more private meetings, or to follow up, with a brief application, the sermons delivered by others in their village-preaching. But these exercises having afforded the utmost satisfaction to his judicious though warm-hearted hearers, he was urged forward to more public services. These he was too humble to covet, and too earnest to refuse. Though his education was sufficiently rude, God had given him from the first a strong athletic mind and a glowing heart,—that downright logic and teeming fancy, whose bold strokes and burning images heat the Saxon temper to the welding point, and make

the popular orator of our English multitude. Then his low original and rough wild history, however much they might have subjected him to scorn had he exchanged the leathern apron for a silken one, or scrambled from the hedge-side into the high places of the church, entailed no suspicion, and awakened much surprise, when the Bedford townsmen saw their blaspheming neighbour a new man, and in a way so disinterested preaching the faith which he once destroyed. The town turned out to hear, and though there was some mockery, many were deeply moved. His own account of it is:—"At first I could not believe that God should speak by me to the heart of any man, still counting myself unworthy; yet those who were thus touched, would love me, and have a particular respect for me; and though I did put it from me, that they should be awakened by me, still they would confess it and affirm it before the saints of God. . . . Wherefore, seeing them in both their words and deeds to be so constant, and also in their hearts so earnestly pressing after the knowledge of Jesus Christ, rejoicing that ever God did send me where they were, then I began to conclude it might be so, that God had owned in his work such a foolish one as I; and then came that word of God to my heart with such sweet refreshment: 'The blessing of them that were ready to perish is come upon me; yea, I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.' At this, therefore, I rejoiced; yea, the tears of those whom God had awakened by my preaching would be both solace and encouragement to me. I thought on those sayings, 'Who is he that maketh me glad, but the same that is made sorry by me?' And again, 'Though I be not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am unto you: for the seal of my apostleship are ye in the Lord.'"

There was a solemnizing and subduing power in Bunyan's ministry, because it was heart-felt. So far as the truths he uttered were capable of becoming subjects of personal consciousness, he had experienced them; and so far as they were subjects of intellectual conviction, he was not only fully persuaded of them, but saw them so clear and evident, that his realizations were continually quickening into sensations. He thus began with a John-Baptist ministry, to which succeeded a Pentecostal evangel; and at last it grew into the Pauline amplitude and completeness, "the whole counsel of God." "In my preaching of the word, I took special notice of this one thing, namely, that the Lord did lead me to begin where the word begins with sinners;

that is, to condemn all flesh, and to open and allege that the curse of God by the law doth belong to and lay hold on all men as they come into the world, because of sin. Now this part of my work I fulfilled with great sense; for the terrors of the law, and guilt for my transgressions, lay heavy on my conscience. I preached what I felt, what I smartingly did feel; even that under which my poor soul did groan and tremble to astonishment. Indeed I have been as one sent to them from the dead; I went myself in chains to preach to them in chains; and carried that fire in my own conscience that I persuaded them to be aware of. . . . Thus I went on for the space of two years, crying out against men's sins, and their fearful state because of them. After which the Lord came in upon my own soul with some sure peace and comfort through Christ; for he did give me many sweet discoveries of his blessed grace through him. Wherefore now I altered in my preaching (for still I preached what I saw and felt). Now, therefore, I did much labour to hold forth Jesus Christ in all his offices, relations, and benefits, unto the world, and did strive also to discover, to condemn, and remove those false supports and props on which the world doth both lean, and by them fall and perish. On these things also I staid as long as on the other. After this, God led me into something of the mystery of union with Christ; wherefore, that I discovered and shewed to them also. And when I had travelled through these three chief points of the word of God, I was caught in my present practice, and cast into prison, where I have lain alone as long again to confirm the truth by way of suffering, as I was before in testifying of it, according to the scriptures, in a way of preaching."

Bunyan's preaching was no incoherent rant. Words of truth and soberness formed the staple of each sermon; and his burning words and startling images were only the electric scintillations along the chain of his scriptural eloquence. Though the common people heard him most gladly, he had occasional hearers of a higher class. Once on a week-day he was expected to preach in a parish church near Cambridge, and a concourse of people had already collected in the churchyard. A gay student was riding past, when he noticed the crowd, and asked what had brought them together. He was told that the people had come out to hear one Bunyan, a tinker, preach. He instantly dismounted, and gave a boy twopence to hold his horse, for he declared he was determined to hear the tinker *prate*. So he went into the church,

and heard the tinker ; but so deep was the impression which that sermon made on the scholar, that he took every subsequent opportunity to attend Bunyan's ministry, and himself became a renowned preacher of the gospel in Cambridgeshire. Still he felt that his errand was to the multitude, and his great anxiety was to penetrate the darkest places of the land, and preach to the most abandoned people. In these labours of unostentatious heroism, he sometimes excited the jealousy of the regular parish ministers, and even under the tolerant rule of the Protector, was in some danger of imprisonment. However, it was not till the Restoration that he was in serious jeopardy ; but thereafter he was among the first victims of the grand combination betwixt priests and rulers to exterminate the gospel in England.

On the 12th of November 1660, he had promised to meet a little congregation in a private house at Samsell in Bedfordshire. Before the hour of meeting he was apprised that a warrant was out to seize him ; but he felt that he owed it to the gospel not to run away at such a time. Accordingly when the people were assembled with no weapons but their Bibles, the constable entered and arrested the preacher. He had only time to speak a few words of counsel and encouragement to his hearers, " You see we are prevented of our opportunity to speak and hear the word of God, and are likely to suffer for the same. But be not discouraged. It is a mercy to suffer for so good a cause. We might have been apprehended as thieves or murderers, or for other wickedness ; but blessed be God, it is not so. We suffer as Christians for well doing ; and better be the persecuted than the persecutors." After being taken before a justice, he was committed to gaol till the ensuing sessions should be held at Bedford. There an indictment was preferred—" That John Bunyan, of the town of Bedford, labourer, being a person of such and such conditions, he hath since such a time devilishly and perniciously abstained from coming to church to hear divine service ; and is a common upholder of several unlawful meetings and conventicles, to the great disturbance and distraction of the good subjects of this kingdom, contrary to the laws of our sovereign lord the King," &c. Of course he was convicted, and sentenced to imprisonment, with certification, that if he did not conform within a given period, he would be banished out of the kingdom.

After Bunyan ceases to be his own biographer, our materials become exceeding scanty. This is the less to be lamented when

we reflect that the history of his "hidden life" is already told. The processes have now been related which formed and developed the inner man; and the few external events that befel him, and the few important things that he did, during the remaining eight-and-twenty years of his mortal pilgrimage, may be recorded in a single page.

His imprisonment was protracted from sessions to sessions, till he had measured out twelve weary years in Bedford gaol. Perhaps we should not call them *weary*. They had their alleviations. His wife and children were allowed to visit him. His blind and most beloved daughter was permitted to cheer his solitude and her own. He had his Bible, and his "Book of Martyrs." He had his imagination, and his pen. Above all, he had a good conscience. He felt it a blessed exchange to quit the "iron cage" of despair for a "den" oft visited by a celestial comforter; and which, however cheerless, did not lack a door to heaven.

Whether it was the man's own humanity, or whether it was that God who assuaged Joseph's captivity, gave Bunyan special favour in the eyes of the keeper of his prison, the fact is certain, that he met with singular indulgence at the least likely hands. Not only was he allowed many a little indulgence in his cell, but he was suffered to go and come with a freedom which could hardly have been exceeded had the county gaol been his own hired house. For months together he was a constant attender of the church-meetings of his brethren in Bedford, and was actually chosen pastor during the period of his incarceration. On one occasion some of the bishops who had heard a rumour of the unusual liberty conceded to him, sent a messenger from London to Bedford to ascertain the truth. The officer was instructed to call at the prison during the night. It was a night when Bunyan had received permission to stay at home with his family; but so uneasy did he feel, that he told his wife he must go back to his old quarters. So late was it that the gaoler blamed him for coming at such an untimely hour; but a little afterwards the messenger arrived. "Are all the prisoners safe?" "Yes." "Is John Bunyan safe?" "Yes." "Let me see him." Bunyan was called, and the messenger went his way; and when he was gone the gaoler told him, "Well, you may go out again just when you think proper; for you know when to return better than I can tell you."

But the best alleviations of his captivity were those wonderful

works which he there projected or composed. Some of these were controversial ; but one of them was his own life, under the title, "Grace abounding to the Chief of Sinners," and another was the "PILGRIM'S PROGRESS."

In 1672 he obtained his liberty, and his friends immediately built for him a large meeting-house, where he continued to preach with little interruption till his death. Once a year he visited London, and was there so popular, that twelve hundred people would gather together at seven in the morning of a winter's working-day to hear him. Amongst the admiring listeners, Dr Owen was frequently found ; and once when Charles the Second asked how a learned man like him could sit down to hear a tinker prate, the great theologian is said to have answered, "May it please your Majesty, could I possess the tinker's abilities for preaching, I would most gladly relinquish all my learning." But popular as he was, he was not fond of praise. One day after he had concluded an impressive discourse, his friends pressed round to thank him for his "sweet sermon." "Aye," he bluntly answered, "you need not remind me of that ; for the devil told me as much before I left the pulpit."

He had numbered sixty years, and written as many books, when he was released from his abundant labours. A young gentleman, his neighbour, had fallen under his father's displeasure, and was much concerned at his father's estrangement as well as at the prospect of being disinherited. He begged Mr Bunyan's friendly interposition to propitiate his father, and prepare the way for his return to parental favour and affection. The kind-hearted man undertook the task, and having successfully achieved it, was returning from Reading to London on horseback, when he was thoroughly drenched with excessive rains. He arrived cold and wet at the house of Mr Strudwick, a grocer on Snow Hill. Here he was seized with fits of shivering, which passed off in violent fever, and after ten days' sickness, on the 31st of August 1688, his pilgrimage ended, and he went in by the gate into the city.

As the most appropriate introduction to the following selections from the practical writings of Bunyan, we would close this rapid history of the MAN, with a few remarks on the THEOLOGIAN and the AUTHOR.

I. Bunyan's theological merits we rank very high. No one can turn over his pages without noticing the abundance of his Scriptural quotations ; and these quotations no one can examine without perceiving how minutely he had studied, and how deeply he had pondered, the word of God. But it is possible to be very *textual*, and yet by no means very *scriptural*. A man may have an exact acquaintance with the literal Bible, and yet entirely miss the great Bible message. He may possess a dexterous command of detached passages and insulated sentences, and yet be entirely ignorant of that peculiar scheme which forms the great gospel revelation. But this was Bunyan's peculiar excellence. He was even better acquainted with the Gospel as the scheme of God, than he was familiar with the Bible-text ; and the consequence is, that though he is sometimes irrelevant in his references, and fanciful in interpreting particular passages, his doctrine is almost always according to the analogy of faith. The doctrine of a free and instant justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ, none even of the Puritans could state with more Luther-like boldness, nor defend with an affection more worthy of Paul. In his last and best days, Coleridge wrote, " I know of no book, the Bible excepted, as above all comparison, which I, according to my judgment and experience, could so safely recommend as teaching and enforcing the whole saving truth, according to the mind that was in Christ Jesus, as the Pilgrim's Progress. It is in my conviction the best *Summa Theologiæ Evangelicæ* ever produced by a writer not miraculously inspired."* Without questioning this verdict, we would include in the encomium some of his other writings, which possibly Coleridge never saw. Such as the Tracts contained in this volume. They exhibit Gospel-truths in so clear a light, and state them in such a frank and happy tone, that he who runs may read, and he who reads in earnest will rejoice. The Pilgrim is a peerless guide to those who have already passed in at the wicket-gate ; but those who are still seeking peace to their trou-

* Remains, vol. iii. p. 391.

bled souls, will find the best directory in "The Jerusalem Sinner Saved."

II. Invaluable as a theologian, Bunyan stands alone as a contributor to theological literature. In recent times no man has done so much to draw the world's delighted attention to the subjects of supreme solicitude. No production of a mortal pen has found so many readers as one work of his; and none has awakened so frequently the sighing behest, "Let me die the death of the righteous."

None has painted the beauty of holiness in taints more lovely, nor spoken in tones more thrilling to the heart of universal humanity. At first the favourite of the vulgar, he is now the wonder of the learned; and from the obscurity, not inglorious, of smoky cupboards and cottage chimneys, he has been escorted up to the highest places of classical renown, and duly canonized by the pontiffs of taste and literature. The man, whom Cowper praised anonymously,

"Lest so despised a name should move a sneer,"

has at last extorted emulous plaudits from a larger host of writers than ever conspired to praise a man of genius, who was also a man of God. Johnson and Franklin, Scott, Coleridge, and Southey, Byron and Montgomery, Macintosh and Macaulay, have exerted their philosophical acumen and poetic feeling to analyze his various spell, and account for his unequalled fame; and though the round-cornered copies, with their diverting woodcuts, have not disappeared from the poor man's ingle, illustrated editions blaze from the shelves of every sumptuous library, new pictures, from its exhaustless themes, light up the walls of each annual exhibition; and amidst the graceful litter of the drawing-room table, you are sure to take up designs from the Pilgrim's Progress. So universal is the ascendancy of the tinker-teacher, so world-wide the diocese of him whom Whitefield created Bishop Bunyan, that probably half the ideas which the outside-world entertains regarding experimental piety, they have, in some form or other, derived from him. One of the most popular preachers in his day, in his little treatises, as well as in his longer allegories, he preaches to countless thousands still. The cause of this unexampled popularity is a question of great practical moment.

And, first of all, Bunyan speaks to the whole of man,—to his

imagination, his intellect, his heart. He had in himself all these ingredients of full-formed humanity, and in his books he lets all of them out. French writers and preachers are apt to deal too exclusively in the one article—fancy ; and though you are amused for the moment with the rocket-shower of brilliant and many-tinted ideas which fall sparkling around you, when the exhibition is ended, you are disappointed to find that the whole was momentary, and that from all the ruby and emerald rain scarcely one gem of solid thought remains.* Scottish writers and preachers are apt to indulge the argumentative cacoëthes of their country, and cramming into a tract or sermon as much hard-thinking as the Bramah-pressure of hydrostatic intellects can condense into the iron paragraphs, they leave no room for such delicate materials as fancy or feeling, illustration, imagery, or affectionate appeal ;† whilst Irish authors and pulpit-orators are so surcharged with their own exuberant enthusiasm, that their main hope of making you think as they think, is to make you feel as they feel. The heart is their Aristotle ; and if they cannot win you by a smile or melt you by a tear, they would think it labour lost to try a syllogism. Bunyan was neither French, nor Scotch, nor Irish. He embodied in his person, though greatly magnified, the average mind of England—playful, affectionate, downright. His intellectual power comes chiefly out in that homely self-commending sense—the brief business-like reasoning, which might be termed Saxon logic, and of which Swift in one century, and Cobbett in another, are obvious instances. His premises are not always true, nor his inferences always legitimate ; but there is such evident absence of sophistry, and even of that refining and hair-splitting which usually beget the suspicion of sophistry—his statements are so sincere, and his conclusions so direct, the language is so perspicuous, and the appeal is made so honestly to each reader's understanding, that his popularity as a reasoner is inevitable. We need not say that the author of the Pilgrim possessed imagination ; but it is important to note the service it rendered to his preaching, and the charm which it still imparts to his miscellaneous

* Pascal was an exception. D'Aubigné, so far as writing in French makes a Frenchman, is another. Their works are full of fancy, but it is the fancy which gives to truth its wings. The rocket is charged, not with coloured sparks, but burning jewels.

† Here, again, exceptions occur, and the greatest of our Scottish preachers is a contradiction to the characteristic style of his country

works. The pictorial power he possessed in a rare degree. His mental eye perceived the truth most vividly. Some minds are moving in a constant mystery. They see men like trees walking. The different doctrines of the Bible all wear dim outlines to them, jostling and jumbling; and after a perplexing morrice of bewildering hints and half discoveries, they vanish into the misty back-ground of nonentity. To Bunyan's bright and broad-waking eye all things were clear. The men walked and the trees stood still. Everything was seen in sharp relief and definite outline—a *reality*. And besides the pictorial, he possessed in highest perfection the illustrative faculty. Not only did his own mind perceive the truth most vividly, but he saw the very way to give others a clear perception of it also. This is the great secret of successful teaching. Like a man who has clambered his difficult way to the top of a rocky eminence, but who, once he has reached the summit, perceives an easier path, and directs his companions along its gentler slopes, and gives them a helping-hand to lift them over the final obstacles; it was by giant struggles over the debris of crumbling hopes, and through jungles of despair, and up the cliffs of apparent impossibility, that Bunyan forced his way to the pinnacle of his eventual joy; but no sooner was he standing there, than his eagle-eye detected the easier path, and he made it the business of his benevolent ministry to guide others into it. Though not the truth, an illustration is a stepping-stone towards it; an indentation in the rock which makes it easier to climb. No man had a happier knack in hewing out these notches in the cliff, and no one knew better where to place them, than this pilgrim's pioneer. Besides, he rightly judged that the value of these suggestive similies—these illustrative stepping-stones—depends very much on their breadth and frequency. But Bunyan appeals not only to the intellect and imagination, but to the hearts of men. There was no bitterness in Bunyan. He was a man of kindness and compassion. How sorry he is for Mr Badman! and how he makes you sympathize with Christian and Mr Ready-to-halt and Mr Feeble-mind, and all the other interesting companions of that eventful journey! And in his sermons how piteously he pleads with sinners for their own souls! and how impressive is the undisguised vehemency of his yearning affections! In the same sentence Bunyan has a word for the man of sense, and another for the man of fancy, and a third for the man of feeling; and by thus blending the intellec-

tual, the imaginative, and the affectionate, he speaks home to the whole of man, and has made his works a lesson-book for all mankind.

Another secret of Bunyan's popularity is the felicity of his style. His English is vernacular, idiomatic, universal ; varying with the subject ; homely in the continuous narrative ; racy and pungent in his lively and often rapid discourse ; and, when occasion requires, "a model of unaffected dignity and rhythmical flow ;" but always plain, strong, and natural. However, in speaking of his style, we do not so much intend his words as his entire mode of expression. A thought is like a gem ; but like a gem it may be spoiled in the setting. A careless artist may chip it and grievously curtail its dimensions ; a clumsy craftsman, in his fear of destroying it, may not sufficiently polish it ; or in his solicitude to shew off its beauty, may overdo the accompanying ornaments. Bunyan was too skilful a workman so to mismanage the matter. His expression neither curtails nor encumbers the thought, but makes the most of it ; that is, presents it to the reader as it is seen by the writer. Though there is a great appearance of amplitude about his compositions, few of his words could be wanted. Some styles are an ill-spun thread, full of inequalities, and shaggy from beginning to end with projecting fibres which spoil its beauty, and add nothing to its strength ; but in its easy continuousness and trim compactness, the thread of Bunyan's discourse flows firm and smooth from first to last. Its fulness regales the ear, and its felicity aids the understanding.

THE
JERUSALEM SINNER SAVED;
OR,
GOOD NEWS FOR THE VILEST OF MEN.

BEGINNING AT JERUSALEM.—Luke xxiv. 47.

THE whole verse runs thus: "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

The words were spoken by Christ, after he rose from the dead, and they are here rehearsed after an historical manner, but do contain in them a formal commission, with a special clause therein. The commission is, as you see, for the preaching of the gospel, and is very distinctly inserted in the holy record by Matthew and Mark. "Go teach all nations," &c. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel unto every creature." Matt. xxviii. 19; Mark xvi. 15. Only this clause is in special mentioned by Luke, who saith, That as Christ would have the doctrine of repentance and remission of sins preached in his name among all nations, so he would have the people of Jerusalem to have the first proffer thereof. Preach it, saith Christ, in all nations, but begin at Jerusalem.

The apostles then, though they had a commission so large as to give them warrant to go and preach the gospel in all the world, yet by this clause they were limited as to the beginning of their ministry: they were to begin this work at Jerusalem. "Beginning at Jerusalem."

Before I proceed to an observation upon the words, I must (but briefly) touch upon two things: namely,

I. Show you what Jerusalem now was.

II. Show you what it was to preach the gospel to them.

I. For the first, Jerusalem is to be considered, either,

1. With respect to the descent of her people : or,

2. With respect to her preference and exaltation : or,

3. With respect to her present state, as to her decays.

First, As to her descent: she was from Abraham, the sons of Jacob, a people that God singled out from the rest of the nations to set his love upon them.

Secondly, As to her preference or exaltation, she was the place of God's worship, and that which had in and with her the special tokens and signs of God's favour and presence, above any other people in the world. Hence the tribes went up to Jerusalem to worship; there was God's house, God's high-priest, God's sacrifices accepted, and God's eye, and God's heart perpetually; Psalm lxxvi. 1, 2; Psalm cxxii.; 1 Kings ix. 3. But,

Thirdly, We are to consider Jerusalem also in her decays; for as she is so considered, she is the proper object of our text, as will be further showed by and by.

Jerusalem, as I told you, was the place and seat of God's worship, but now decayed, degenerated, and apostatized. The word, the rule of worship, was rejected of them, and in its place they had put and set up their own traditions; they had rejected also the most weighty ordinances, and put in the room thereof their own little things, Matt. xv.; Mark vii. Jerusalem was therefore now greatly backsliding, and become the place where truth and true religion were much defaced.

It was also now become the very sink of sin and seat of hypocrisy, and gulf where true religion was drowned. Here also now reigned presumption, and groundless confidence in God, which is the bane of souls. Amongst its rulers, doctors, and leaders, envy, malice, and blasphemy vented itself against the power of godliness, in all places where it was espied; as also against the promoters of it; yea, their Lord and Maker could not escape them.

In a word, Jerusalem was now become the shambles,

the very slaughter-shop for saints. This was the place where—in the prophets, Christ, and his people, were most horribly persecuted and murdered. Yea, so hardened at this time was this Jerusalem in her sins, that she feared not to commit the biggest, and to bind herself by wish under the guilt and damning evil of it ; saying, when she had murdered the Son of God, “ His blood be upon us and our children.”

And though Jesus Christ did, both by doctrine, miracles, and holiness of life, seek to put a stop to their villanies, yet they shut their eyes, stopped their ears, and rested not, till, as was hinted before, they had driven him out of the world. Yea, that they might, if possible, have extinguished his name, and exploded his doctrine out of the world, they, against all argument, and in despite of Heaven, its mighty hand, and undeniable proof of his resurrection, did hire soldiers to invent a lie, saying, his disciples stole him away from the grave ; on purpose that men might not count him the Saviour of the world, nor trust in him for the remission of sins.

They were, saith Paul, contrary to all men : for they did not only shut up the door of life against themselves, but forbade that it should be opened to any else. “ Forbidding us,” saith he, “ to preach to the Gentiles, that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway ;” Matt. xxiii. 35 ; chap. xv. 7–9 ; Mark vii. 6–8 ; Matt. iii. 7–9 ; John viii. 33, 41 ; Matt. xxvii. 18 ; Mark iii. 30 ; Matt. xxiii. 37 ; Luke xiii. 33, 34 ; Matt. xxvii. 25 ; chap. xx. 11–16 ; 1 Thess. ii. 14–16.

This is the city, and these are the people ; this is their character, and these are their sins : nor can there be produced their parallel in all this world. Nay, what world, what people, what nation, for sin and transgression, could, or can be compared to Jerusalem ! especially if you join to the matter of fact the light they sinned against, and the patience which they abused. Infinite was the wickedness upon this account which they committed.

After all their abusings of wise men, and prophets, God sent unto them John Baptist, to reduce them, and then

his Son to redeem them ; but they would be neither reduced nor redeemed, but persecuted both to the death. Nor did they, as I said, stop here ; the holy apostles they afterwards persecuted also to death, even so many as they could ; the rest they drove from them unto the utmost corners.

II. I come now to show you what it was to preach the gospel to them. It was, saith Luke, to preach to them "repentance and remission of sins" in Christ's name ; or, as Mark has it, to bid them "repent and believe the gospel," Mark i. 15 ; not that repentance is a cause of remission, but a sign of our hearty reception thereof. Repentance is therefore here put to intimate, that no pretended faith of the gospel is good that is not accompanied with it : and this he doth on purpose, because he would not have them deceive themselves : for with what faith can he expect remission of sins in the name of Christ, that is not heartily sorry for them ? Or how shall a man be able to give to others a satisfactory account of his unfeigned subjection to the gospel, that yet abides in his impenitency ?

Wherefore repentance is here joined with faith in the way of receiving the gospel. Faith is that without which it cannot be received at all ; and repentance that without which it cannot be received unfeignedly. When therefore Christ says, he would have repentance and remission of sins preached in his name among all nations, it is as much as to say, I will that all men every where be sorry for their sins, and accept of mercy at God's hand through me, lest they fall under his wrath in the judgment. For as I had said, without repentance, what pretence soever men have of faith, they cannot escape the wrath to come. Wherefore Paul saith, God commands "all men every where to repent," (in order to their salvation), "because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained ;" Acts xvii. 31.

And now to come to this clause, "Beginning at Jerusalem ;" that is, that Christ would have Jerusalem have the first offer of the gospel.

1. This cannot be so commanded, because they had now

any more right of themselves thereto than had any of the nations of the world ; for their sins had divested them of all self-deservings.

2. Nor yet, because they stood upon the advance-ground with the worst of the sinners of the nations ; nay, rather, the sinners of the nations had the advance-ground of them : for Jerusalem was, long before she had added this iniquity to her sin, worse than the very nations that God cast out before the children of Israel ; 2 Chron. xxxiii.

3. It must therefore follow, that this clause, *Begin at Jerusalem*, was put into this commission of mere grace and compassion, even from the overflowings of the bowels of mercy ; for indeed they were the worst, and so in the most deplorable condition of any people under the heavens.

Whatever, therefore, their relation was to Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob, however they formerly had been the people among whom God had placed his name and worship, they were now degenerated from God, more than the nations were from their idols, and were become guilty of the highest sins which the people of the world were capable of committing. Nay, none can be capable of committing of such pardonable sins as they committed against their God, when they slew his Son, and persecuted his name and word.

From these words, therefore, thus explained, we gain this observation :

That Jesus Christ would have mercy offered in the first place to the biggest sinners.

That these Jerusalem sinners were the biggest sinners that ever were in the world, I think none will deny, that believes that Christ was the best man that ever was in the world, and also was their Lord God. And that they were to have the first offer of his grace, the text is as clear as the sun ; for it saith, “ *Begin at Jerusalem.* ” “ *Preach,* ” saith he, “ *repentance and remission of sins* ” to the Jerusalem sinners : to the Jerusalem sinners in the first place.

One would a-thought, since the Jerusalem sinners were the worst and greatest sinners, Christ’s greatest enemies, and those that not only despised his person, doctrine, and

miracles, but that a little before had had their hands up to the elbows in his heart-blood, that he should rather have said, Go into all the world, and preach repentance and remission of sins among all nations ; and after that offer the same to Jerusalem ; yea, it had been infinite grace, if he had said so. But what grace is this, or what name shall we give it, when he commands that this repentance and remission of sins, which is designed to be preached in all nations, should first be offered to Jerusalem, in the first place to the worst of sinners !

Nor was this the first time that the grace which was in the heart of Christ thus shewed itself to the world. For while he was yet alive, even while he was yet in Jerusalem, and perceived even among these Jerusalem sinners, which was the most vile amongst them, he still in his preaching did signify that he had a desire that the worst of these worst should in the first place come unto him. The which he showeth, where he saith to the better sort of them, "The publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of God before you;" Matt. xxi. 31. Also when he compared Jerusalem with the sinners of the nations, then he commands that the Jerusalem sinners should have the gospel at present confined to them. "Go not," saith he, "into the way of the Gentiles, and into any of the cities of the Samaritans enter ye not ; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel ;" Matt. x. 5, 6 ; chap. xxiii. 37 ; but go rather to them, for they were in the most fearful plight.

These therefore must have the cream of the gospel, namely, the first offer thereof in his lifetime : yea, when he departed out of the world, he left this as part of his last will with his preachers, that they also should offer it first to Jerusalem. He had a mind, a careful mind, as it seems, to privilege the worst of sinners with the first offer of mercy, and to take from among them a people to be the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb.

The 15th of Luke also is famous for this, where the Lord Jesus takes more care, as appears there by three parables,

for the lost sheep, lost groat, and the prodigal son, than for the other sheep, the other pence, or for the son that said he had never transgressed, yea, he shows that there is joy in heaven, among the angels of God, at the repentance of one sinner, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance ; Luke xv.

After this manner therefore the mind of Christ was set on the salvation of the biggest sinners in his lifetime. But join to this, this clause, which he carefully put into the apostles' commission to preach, when he departed hence to the Father, and then you shall see that his heart was vehemently set upon it ; for these were part of his last words with them, Preach my gospel to all nations, but see that you begin at Jerusalem.

Nor did the apostles overlook this clause when their Lord was gone into heaven : they went first to them of Jerusalem, and preached Christ's gospel to them : they abode also there for a season and time, and preached it to no body else, for they had regard to the commandment of their Lord.

And it is to be observed, namely, that the first sermon which they preached after the ascension of Christ, it was preached to the very worst of these Jerusalem sinners, even to these that were the murderers of Jesus Christ, Acts ii. 23, for these are part of the sermon : " Ye took him, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain him." Yea, the next sermon, and the next, and also the next to that, was preached to the self-same murderers, to the end they might be saved ; Acts iii. 14-16 ; chap. iv. 10, 11 ; chap. v. 30 ; chap. vii. 52.

But we will return to the first sermon that was preached to these Jerusalem sinners, by which will be manifest more than great grace, if it be duly considered.

For after that Peter, and the rest of the apostles, had, in their exhortation, persuaded these wretches to believe that they had killed the Prince of life, and after they had duly fallen under the guilt of their murder, saying, " Men and brethren, what shall we do ?" he replies, by an universal

tender to them all in general, considering them as Christ's killers, that if they were sorry for what they had done, and would be baptized for the remission of their sins in his name, they should receive the gift of the Holy Ghost ; Acts ii. 37, 38.

This he said to them all, though he knew that they were such sinners. Yea, he said it without the least stick or stop, or pause of spirit, as to whether he had best to say so or no. Nay, so far off was Peter from making an objection against one of them, that by a particular clause in his exhortation, he endeavours, that not one of them may escape the salvation offered. "Repent," saith he, "and be baptized every one of you." I shut out never a one of you ; for I am commanded by my Lord to deal with you, as it were, one by one, by the word of his salvation. But why speaks he so particularly ? Oh ! there were reasons for it. The people with whom the apostles were now to deal, as they were murderers of our Lord, and to be charged in the general with his blood, so they had their various and particular acts of villany in the guilt thereof, now lying upon their consciences. And the guilt of these their various and particular acts of wickedness, could not perhaps be reached to a removal thereof, but by this particular application. Repent every one of you ; be baptized every one of you, in his name, for the remission of sins, and you shall, every one of you, receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Object. But I was one of them that plotted to take away his life. May I be saved by him ?

Peter. Every one of you.

Object. But I was one of them that bare false witness against him. Is there grace for me ?

Peter. For every one of you.

Object. But I was one of them that cried out, Crucify him, crucify him ; and desired that Barabbas the murderer might live, rather than him. What will become of me, think you ?

Peter. I am to preach repentance and remission of sins to every one of you, says Peter.

Object. But I was one of them that did spit in his face when he stood before his accusers. I also was one that mocked him, when in anguish he hanged bleeding on the tree. Is there room for me ?

Peter. For every one of you, says Peter.

Object. But I was one of them that in his extremity said, give him gall and vinegar to drink. Why may not I expect the same when anguish and guilt is upon me ?

Peter. Repent of these your wickednesses, and here is remission of sins for every one of you.

Object. But I railed on him, I reviled him, I hated him, I rejoiced to see him mocked at by others. Can there be hopes for me ?

Peter. There is for every one of you. "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Oh ! what a blessed "Every one of you," is here ! How willing was Peter, and the Lord Jesus, by his ministry, to catch these murderers with the word of the gospel, that they might be made monuments of the grace of God ! How unwilling, I say, was he, that any of these should escape the hand of mercy ! Yea, what an amazing wonder it is to think, that above all the world, and above every body in it, these should have the first offer of mercy ! "Beginning at Jerusalem."

But was there not something of moment in this clause of the commission ? Did not Peter, think you, see a great deal in it, that he should thus begin with these men, and thus offer, so particularly, this grace to each particular man of them ?

But, as I told you, this is not all ; these Jerusalem sinners must have this offer again and again ; every one of them must be offered it over and over. Christ would not take their first rejection for a denial, nor their second repulse for a denial ; but he will have grace offered once, and twice, and thrice, to these Jerusalem sinners. Is not this amazing grace ! Christ will not be put off. These are the sinners that are sinners indeed. They are sinners of the

biggest sort ; consequently such as Christ can, if they convert and be saved, best serve his ends and designs upon. Of which more anon.

But what a pitch of grace is this ! Christ is minded to amaze the world, and to shew, that he acteth not like the children of men. This is that which he said of old. " I will not execute the fierceness of my wrath, I will not return to destroy Ephraim ; for I am God and not man ;" Hos. xi. 9. This is not the manner of men ; men are shorter winded ; men are soon moved to take vengeance, and to right themselves in a way of wrath and indignation. But God is full of grace, full of patience, ready to forgive, and one that delights in mercy. All this is seen in our text. The biggest sinners must first be offered mercy ; they must, I say, have the cream of the gospel offered unto them.

But we will a little proceed. In the third chapter we find, that they who escaped converting by the first sermon, are called upon again, to accept of grace and forgiveness, for their murder committed upon the Son of God. You have killed, yea, " you have denied, the holy one and the just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you ; and killed the Prince of life." Mark, he falls again upon the very men that actually were, as you have it in the chapters following, his very betrayers and murderers, Acts iii. 14, 15 ; as being loath that they should escape the mercy of forgiveness ; and exhorts them again to repent, that their sins might " be blotted out ;" verses 19, 20.

Again, in the fourth chapter, he charges them afresh with this murder, ver. 10 ; but withal tells them, salvation is in no other. Then, like a heavenly decoy, he puts himself also among them, to draw them the better under the net of the gospel ; saying, " There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved ;" ver. 12.

In the fifth chapter you find them railing at him, because he continued preaching among them salvation in the name of Jesus. But he tells them, that that very Jesus whom they had slain and hanged on a tree, him God had

raised up, and exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins : ver. 29-31. Still insinuating, that though they had killed him, and to this day rejected him, yet his business was to bestow upon them repentance and forgiveness of sins.

'Tis true, after they began to kill again, and when nothing but killing would serve their turn, then they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word. Yet even some of them so hankered after the conversion of the Jews, that they preached the gospel only to them. Also the apostles still made their abode at Jerusalem, in hopes that they might yet let down their net for another draught of these Jerusalem sinners. Neither did Paul and Barnabas, who were the ministers of God to the Gentiles, but offer the gospel, in the first place, to those of them that for their wickedness were scattered like vagabonds among the nations ; yea, and when they rendered rebellion and blasphemy for their service and love, they replied, it was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to them ; Acts i. 8 ; chap. xiii. 46, 47.

Nor was this their preaching unsuccessful among these people : but the Lord Jesus so wrought with the word thus spoken, that thousands of them came flocking to him for mercy. Three thousand of them closed with him at the first ; and afterwards two thousand more ; for now they were in number about five thousand ; whereas before sermons were preached to these murderers, the number of the disciples was not above " a hundred and twenty ;" Acts i. 15 ; chap. ii. 41 ; chap. iv. 4.

Also among these people that thus flocked to him for mercy, there was a " great company of the priests ;" chap. vi. 7. Now the priests were they that were the greatest of these biggest sinners ; they were the ringleaders, they were the inventors and ringleaders in the mischief. It was they that set the people against the Lord Jesus, and that were the cause why the uproar increased, until Pilate had given sentence upon him. " The chief priests and elders," says the text, " persuaded (the people) the multitude," that

they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus; Matt. xxvii. 20. And yet behold the priests, yea, a great company of the priests, became obedient to the faith.

Oh the greatness of the grace of Christ, that he should be thus in love with the souls of Jerusalem sinners! that he should be thus delighted with the salvation of the Jerusalem sinners! that he should not only will that his gospel should be offered them, but that it should be offered unto them first, and before other sinners were admitted to a hearing of it. "Begin at Jerusalem."

Were this doctrine well believed, where would there be a place for a doubt, or a fear of the damnation of the soul, if the sinner be penitent, how bad a life soever he has lived, how many soever in number are his sins?

But this grace is hid from the eyes of men; the devil hides it from them; for he knows it is alluring, he knows it has an attracting virtue in it: for this is it that above all arguments can draw the soul to God.

I cannot help it, but must let drop another word. The first church, the Jerusalem church, from whence the gospel was to be sent into all the world, was a church made up of Jerusalem sinners. These great sinners were here the most shining monuments of the exceeding grace of God.

Thus you see I have proved the doctrine; and that not only by showing you that this was the practice of the Lord Jesus Christ in his lifetime, but his last will when he went up to God; saying, Begin to preach at Jerusalem.

Yea, it is yet further manifested, in that when his ministers first began to preach there, he joined his power to the word, to the converting of thousands of his betrayers and murderers, and also many of the ringleading priests to the faith

I shall now proceed, and shall show you,

1. The reasons of the point:

2. And then make some application of the whole.

The observation, you know, is this: Jesus Christ would have mercy offered, in the first place, to the biggest sin-

ners, to the Jerusalem sinners: "Preach repentance, and remission of sins, in my name, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

The reasons of the point are :

First, Because the biggest sinners have most need thereof. He that has most need, reason says, should be helped first. I mean, when a helping hand is offered, and now it is : for the gospel of the grace of God is sent to help the world ; Acts xvi. 9. But the biggest sinner has most need. Therefore, in reason, when mercy is sent down from heaven to men, the worst of men should have the first offer of it. "Begin at Jerusalem." This is the reason which the Lord Christ himself renders, why in his lifetime he left the best, and turned him to the worst ; why he sat so loose from the righteous, and stuck so close to the wicked. "The whole," saith he, "have no need of the physician, but the sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance ;" Mark ii. 15-17.

Above you read, that the scribes and pharisees said to his disciples, "How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?" Alas ! they did not know the reason : but the Lord renders them one, and such an one as is both natural and cogent, saying, These have need, most need. Their great necessity requires that I should be most friendly, and show my grace first to them.

Not that the other were sinless, and so had no need of a Saviour ; but the publicans and their companions were the biggest sinners ; they were, as to view, worse than the scribes ; and therefore in reason should be helped first, because they had most need of a Saviour.

Men that are at the point to die have more need of the physician than they that are but now and then troubled with an heart-fainting qualm. The publicans and sinners were, as it were, in the mouth of death ; death was swallowing of them down : and therefore the Lord Jesus receives them first, offers them mercy first. "The whole have no need of the physician, but the sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." The sick, as I said, is the biggest sinner. whether he sees his

disease or not. He is stained from head to foot, from heart to life and conversation. This man, in every man's judgment, has the most need of mercy. There is nothing attends him from bed to board, and from board to bed again, but the visible characters, and obvious symptoms, of eternal damnation. This therefore is the man that has need, most need; and therefore in reason should be helped in the first place. Thus it was with the people concerned in the text, they were the worst of sinners, Jerusalem sinners, sinners of the biggest size; and therefore such as had the greatest need; wherefore they must have mercy offered to them, before it be offered any where else in the world. "Begin at Jerusalem," offer mercy first to a Jerusalem sinner. This man has most need, he is farthest from God, nearest to hell, and so one that has most need. This man's sins are in number the most, in cry the loudest, in weight the heaviest, and consequently will sink him soonest: wherefore he has most need of mercy. This man is shut up in Satan's hand, fastest bound in the cords of his sins: one that justice is whetting his sword to cut off; and therefore has most need, not only of mercy, but that it should be extended to him in the first place.

But a little further to show you the true nature of this reason, to wit, That Jesus Christ would have mercy offered, in the first place, to the biggest sinners.

First, Mercy ariseth from the bowels and compassion, from pity, and from a feeling of the condition of those in misery. "In his love, and in his pity, he saveth us." And again, "The Lord is pitiful, very pitiful, and of great mercy;" Isa. lxiii. 9; James v. 11.

Now, where pity and compassion is, there is yearning of bowels; and where there is that, there is a readiness to help. And, I say again, the more deplorable and dreadful the condition is, the more directly doth bowels and compassion turn themselves to such, and offer help and deliverance. All this flows from our first scripture proof, I came to call them that have need; to call them first, while the rest look on and murmur.

"How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?" Ephraim was a

revolter from God, a man that had given himself up to devilism : a company of men, the ten tribes, that worshipped devils, while Judah kept with his God. " But how shall I give thee up, Ephraim ? How shall I deliver thee, Israel ? How shall I make thee as Admah ? How shall I set thee as Zeboim ? (and yet thou art worse than they : nor has Samaria committed half thy sins) ; Ezek. xvi. 46-51. My heart is turned within me, and my repentings are kindled together ;" Hos. xi. 8.

But where do you find that ever the Lord did thus yearn in his bowels for and after any self-righteous man ? No, no ; they are the publicans and harlots, idolaters and Jerusalem sinners, for whom his bowels thus yearn and tumble about within him : for, alas ! poor worms, they have most need of mercy.

Had not the good Samaritan more compassion for that man that fell among thieves (though that fall was occasioned by his going from the place where they worshipped God, to Jericho, the cursed city) than we read he had for any other besides ? His wine was for him, his oil was for him, his beast for him ; his penny, his care, and his swaddling bands for him ; for alas ! wretch, he had most need ; Luke x. 30-35.

Zaccheus the publican, the chief of the publicans, one that had made himself the richer by wronging of others ; the Lord at that time singled him out from all the rest of his brother publicans, and that in the face of many Pharisees, and proclaimed in the audience of them all, that that day salvation was come to his house ; Luke xix. 1-8.

The woman also that had been bound down by Satan for eighteen years together, his compassions putting him upon it, he loosed her, though those that stood by snarled at him for so doing ; Luke xiii. 11-13.

And why the woman of Sarepta, and why Naaman the Syrian, rather than widows and lepers in Israel, but because their conditions were more deplorable, (for that) they were most forlorn, and farthest from help ; Luke iv. 25, 27.

But I say, why all these, thus named? why have we not a catalogue of some holy men that were so in their own eyes, and in the judgment of the world? Alas! if at any time any of them are mentioned, how seemingly coldly doth the record of scripture present them to us? Nicodemus, a night professor, and Simon the pharisee, with his fifty pence; and their great ignorance of the methods of grace, we have now and then touched upon.

Mercy seems to be out of his proper channel, when it deals with self-righteous men; but then it runs with a full stream when it extends itself to the biggest sinners. As God's mercy is not regulated by man's goodness, nor obtained by man's worthiness; so not much set out by saving of any such. But more of this anon.

And here let me ask my reader a question: suppose that as thou art walking by some pond side, thou shouldst espy in it four or five children all in danger of drowning, and one in more danger than all the rest, judge which has most need to be helped out first? I know thou wilt say, he that is nearest drowning. Why, this is the case; the bigger sinner, the nearer drowning; therefore the bigger sinner the more need of mercy; yea, of help by mercy in the first place. And to this our text agrees, when it saith, "Beginning at Jerusalem." Let the Jerusalem sinner, says Christ, have the first offer, the first invitation, the first tender of my grace and mercy, for he is the biggest sinner, and so has most need thereof.

Secondly, Christ Jesus would have mercy offered in the first place to the biggest sinners, because when they, any of them, receive it, it redounds most to the fame of his name.

Christ Jesus, as you may perceive, has put himself under the term of a physician, a doctor for curing of diseases: and you know that applause and fame, are things that physicians much desire. That is it that helps them to patients, and that also that will help their patients to commit themselves to their skill for cure, with the more confidence and repose of spirit. And the best way for a doctor

or physician to get himself a name, is, in the first place, to take in hand, and cure some such as all others have given off for lost and dead. Physicians get neither name nor fame by pricking of wheals, or pricking out thistles, or by laying of plaisters to the scratch of a pin ; every old woman can do this. But if they would have a name and a fame, if they will have it quickly they must, as I said, do some great and desperate cures. Let them fetch one to life that was dead ; let them recover one to his wits that was mad ; let them make one that was born blind to see ; or let them give ripe wits to a fool ; these are notable cures, and he that can do thus, and if he doth thus first, he shall have the name and fame he desires ; he may lie a-bed till noon.

Why, Christ Jesus forgiveth sins for a name, and so begets of himself a good report in the hearts of the children of men. And therefore in reason he must be willing, as also he did command, that his mercy should be offered first to the biggest sinners.

“ I will forgive their sins, iniquities, and transgressions,” says he, “ and it shall turn to me for a name of joy, and a praise and an honour, before all the nations of the earth ;” Jer. xxxiii. 8, 9.

And hence it is, that at his first appearing he took upon him to do such mighty works : he got a fame thereby, he got a name thereby ; Matt. iv. 23, 24.

When Christ had cast the legion of devils out of the man of whom you read, Mark v., he bid him go home to his friends, and tell it : “ Go home,” saith he, “ to thy friends, and tell them how great things God has done for thee, and has had compassion on thee ;” Mark v. 19. Christ Jesus seeks a name, and desireth a fame in the world ; and therefore, or the better to obtain that, he commands that mercy should first be proffered to the biggest sinners, because, by the saving of one of them he makes all men marvel. As 'tis said of the man last mentioned, whom Christ cured towards the beginning of his ministry : “ And he departed,” says the text, “ and began to publish in Decapolis, how great things Jesus had done for him ; and all men did marvel,” ver. 20.

When John told Christ, that they saw one casting out devils in his name, and they forbade him, because he followed not with them, what is the answer of Christ? "Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me." No; they will rather cause his praise to be heard, and his name to be magnified, and so put glory on the head of Christ.

But we will follow a little our metaphor: Christ, as I said, has put himself under the term of a physician; consequently he desireth that his fame, as to the salvation of sinners, may spread abroad, and that the world may see what he can do. And to this end, he has not only commanded, that the biggest sinners should have the first offer of his mercy, but has, as physicians do, put out his bills, and published his doings, that things may be read and talked of. Yea, he has moreover, in these his blessed bills, the holy scriptures I mean, inserted the very names of persons, the places of their abode, and the great cures that, by the means of his salvations, he has wrought upon them to this very end. Here is, *Item*, such a one, by my grace and redeeming blood, was made a monument of everlasting life; and such a one, by my perfect obedience, became an heir of glory. And then he produceth their names.

Item, I saved Lot from the guilt and damnation that he had procured to himself by his incest.

Item, I saved David from the vengeance that belonged to him for committing of adultery and murder.

Here is also Solomon, Manasseh, Peter, Magdalen, and many others, made mention of in this book. Yea, here are their names, their sins, and their salvations recorded together, that you may read and know what a Saviour he is, and do him honour in the world. For why are these things thus recorded, but to show to sinners what he can do, to the praise and glory of his grace?

And it is observable, as I said before, we have but very little of the salvation of little sinners mentioned in God's book, because that would not have answered the design, to wit, to bring glory and fame to the name of the Son of God.

What should be the reason, think you, why Christ should so easily take a denial of the great ones, that were the grandeur of the world, and struggle so hard for hedge-creepers and highway-men (as that parable, Luke xiv., seems to import he doth), but to show forth the riches of the glory of his grace to his praise? This I say, is one reason to be sure.

They that had their grounds, their yoke of oxen, and their marriage joys, were invited to come; but they made their excuse, and that served the turn. But when he comes to deal with the worst, he saith to his servants, Go ye out and bring them in hither. "Go out quickly, and bring in hither the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind." And they did so: and he said again, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled;" Luke xiv. 18, 19, 23. These poor, lame, maimed, blind, hedge-creepers and highway-men, must come in, must be forced in. These, if saved, will make his merits shine.

When Christ was crucified, and hanged up between the earth and heavens, there were two thieves crucified with him; and behold, he lays hold of one of them and will have him away with him to glory. Was not this a strange act, and a display of unthought of grace? Were there none but thieves there, or were the rest of that company out of his reach? Could he not, think you, have stooped from the cross to the ground, and have laid hold on some honestest man if he would? Yes, doubtless. Oh! but then he would not have displayed his grace, nor so have pursued his own designs, namely, to get to himself a praise and a name: but now he has done it to purpose. For who that shall read this story, but must confess, that the Son of God is full of grace; for a proof of the riches thereof, he left behind him, when upon the cross he took the thief away with him to glory. Nor can this one act of his be buried; it will be talked of to the end of the world to his praise. "Men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts, and will declare thy greatness; they shall abundantly

utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness. They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power; to make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom ;" Psalm cxlv. 6-12.

When the word of God came among the conjurers and those soothsayers that you read of, Acts xix., and had prevailed with some of them to accept of the grace of Christ, the Holy Ghost records it with a boast, for that it would redound to his praise, saying,

" And many of them that used curious arts, brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed ;" Acts xix. 19, 20. It wrenched out of the clutches of Satan some of those of whom he thought himself most sure. " So mightily grew the word of God." It grew mightily, it encroached upon the kingdom of the devil. It pursued him, and took the prey; it forced him to let go his hold: it brought away captive, as prisoners taken by force of arms, some of the most valiant of his army: it fetched back from, as it were, the confines of hell, some of those that were his most trusty, and that with hell had been at an agreement: it made them come and confess their deeds, and burn their books before all men: " So mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed."

Thus, therefore, you see why Christ will have mercy offered in the first place to the biggest sinners; they have most need thereof; and this is the most ready way to extol his name that rideth upon the heavens to our help. But,

Thirdly, Christ Jesus would have mercy offered in the first place to the biggest sinners, because by their forgiveness and salvation, others hearing of it, will be encouraged the more to come to him for life.

For the physician, by curing the most desperate at the first, doth not only get himself a name, but begets encouragement in the minds of other diseased folk to come to him for help. Hence you read of our Lord, that after,

through his tender mercy, he had cured many of great diseases, his fame was spread abroad, "They brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy, and he healed them. And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and Decapolis, and Jerusalem, and Judea, and from beyond Jordan ;" Matt. iv. 24, 25.

See here, he first by working gets himself a fame, a name, and renown, and now men take encouragement, and bring from all quarters their diseased to him, being helped, by what they had heard, to believe that their diseased should be healed.

Now, as he did with those outward cures, so he does in the proffers of his grace and mercy: he proffers that in the first place to the biggest sinners, that others may take heart to come to him to be saved. I will give you a scripture or two, I mean to show you that Christ, by commanding that his mercy should in the first place be offered to the biggest of sinners, has a design thereby to encourage and provoke others to come also to him for mercy.

"God," saith Paul, "who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved); and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." But why did he do all this? "That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus;" Eph. ii. 4-7.

See, here is a design; God lets out his mercy to Ephesus of design, even to shew to the ages to come the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness to them through Christ Jesus. And why to shew by these the exceeding riches of his grace to the ages to come, through Christ Jesus, but to allure them, and their children also, to come to him, and to partake of the same grace through Christ Jesus?

But what was Paul, and the Ephesian sinners? (of Paul we will speak anon). These Ephesian sinners, they were

men dead in sins, men that walked according to the dictates and motions of the devil ; worshippers of Diana, that effeminate goddess ; men far off from God, aliens and strangers to all good things ; such as were far off from that, as I said, and consequently in a most deplorable condition. As the Jerusalem sinners were of the highest sort among the Jews, so these Ephesian sinners were of the highest sort among the Gentiles ; Eph. ii. 1-3, 11, 12 ; Acts xix. 35.

Wherefore as by the Jerusalem sinners, in saving them first, he had a design to provoke others to come to him for mercy, so the same design is here set on foot again, in his calling and converting the Ephesian sinners, "That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace," says he, "in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus." There is yet one hint behind. It is said that God saved these for his love ; that is, as I think, for the setting forth, for the commendations of his love, for the advance of his love, in the hearts and minds of them that should come after. As who should say, God has had mercy upon, and been gracious to you, that he might shew to others, for their encouragement, that they have ground to come to him to be saved. When God saves one great sinner, it is to encourage another great sinner to come to him for mercy.

He saved the thief, to encourage thieves to come to him for mercy ; he saved Magdalen, to encourage other Magdalens to come to him for mercy ; he saved Saul, to encourage Sauls to come to him for mercy ; and this Paul himself doth say, "For this cause," saith he, "I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting ;" 1 Tim. i. 16.

How plain are the words ! Christ, in saving of me, has given to the world a pattern of his grace, that they might see and believe, and come, and be saved ; that they that are to be born hereafter might believe on Jesus Christ to life everlasting.

But what was Paul ? Why, he tells you himself ; I am, says he, the chief of sinners : I was, says he, a blasphemers

a persecutor, an injurious person ; but I obtained mercy ; 1 Tim. i. 14, 15. Ay, that is well for you, Paul ; but what advantage have we thereby ? Oh, very much, saith he ; for, “ for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first, Jesus Christ might shew all long-suffering for a pattern to them which shall believe on him to life everlasting.”

Thus, therefore, you see that this third reason is of strength, namely, that Jesus Christ would have mercy offered in the first place to the biggest sinners, because, by their forgiveness and salvation, others, hearing of it, will be encouraged the more to come to him for mercy.

It may well therefore be said to God, Thou delightest in mercy, and mercy pleases thee ; Mich. vii. 18.

But who believes that this was God’s design in shewing mercy of old—namely, that we that come after might take courage to come to him for mercy ; or that Jesus Christ would have mercy offered in the first place to the biggest sinners, to stir up others to come to him for life ? This is not the manner of men, O God !

But David saw this betimes ; therefore he makes this one argument with God, that he would blot out his transgressions, that he would forgive his adultery, his murders, and horrible hypocrisy. Do it, O Lord, saith he, do it, and “ then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee ;” Psalm li. 7–13.

He knew that the conversion of sinners would be a work highly pleasing to God, as being that which he had designed before he made mountain or hill : wherefore he comes, and he saith, Save me, O Lord ; if thou wilt but save me, I will fall in with thy design ; I will help to bring what sinners to thee I can. And, Lord, I am willing to be made a preacher myself, for that I have been a horrible sinner : wherefore, if thou shalt forgive my great transgressions, I shall be a fit man to tell of thy wondrous grace to others. Yea, Lord, I dare promise, that if thou wilt have mercy upon me, it shall tend to the glory of thy grace, and also to the increase of thy kingdom ; for I will tell it, and sinners will hear on’t. And there is nothing so suiteth

with the hearing sinner as mercy, and to be informed that God is willing to bestow it upon him. "I will teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee."

Nor will Christ Jesus miss of his design in proffering of mercy in the first place to the biggest sinners. You know what work the Lord, by laying hold of the woman of Samaria, made among the people there. They knew that she was a town sinner, an adulteress, yea, one that after the most audacious manner lived in uncleanness with a man that was not her husband : but when she, from a turn upon her heart, went into the city, and said to her neighbours, "Come," Oh how they came! how they flocked out of the city to Jesus Christ! "Then they went out of the city, and came to him." "And many of the Samaritans (people perhaps as bad as herself) believed on him, for the saying of the woman, which testified, saying, He told me all that ever I did;" John iv. 39.

That word, "He told me all that ever I did," was a great argument with them; for by that they gathered, that though he knew her to be vile, yet he did not despise her, nor refuse to shew how willing he was to communicate his grace unto her; and this fetched over, first her, then them.

This woman, as I said, was a Samaritan sinner, a sinner of the worst complexion: for the Jews abhorred to have ought to do with them, ver. 9; wherefore none more fit than she to be made one of the decoys of heaven, to bring others of these Samaritan wild-fowls under the net of the grace of Christ. And she did the work to purpose. Many, and many more of the Samaritans believed on him; ver. 40-42. The heart of man, though set on sin, will, when it comes once to a persuasion that God is willing to have mercy upon us, incline to come to Jesus Christ for life. Witness those turn-aways from God that you also read of in Jeremiah; for after they had heard three or four times over, that God had mercy for backsliders, they broke out, and said, "Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the

Lord our God." Or as those in Hosea did, "For in thee the fatherless find mercy;" Jer. iii. 22; Hos. xiv. 1-3.

Mercy, and the revelation thereof, is the only antidote against sin. It is of a thawing nature; it will loose the heart that is frozen up in sin; yea, it will make the unwilling willing to come to Jesus Christ for life.

Wherefore, do you think, was it that Jesus Christ told the adulterous woman, and that before so many sinners, that he had not condemned her, but to allure her, with them there present, to hope to find favour at his hands? (As he also saith in another place, "I came not to judge, but to save the world.") For might they not thence most rationally conclude, that if Jesus Christ had rather save than damn an harlot, there was encouragement for them to come to him for mercy.

I heard once a story from a soldier, who with his company had laid siege against a fort, that so long as the besieged were persuaded their foes would shew them no favour, they fought like madmen; but when they saw one of their fellows taken, and received to favour, they all came tumbling down from their fortress, and delivered themselves into their enemies' hands.

I am persuaded, did men believe that there is that grace and willingness in the heart of Christ to save sinners, as the word imports there is, they would come tumbling into his arms: but Satan has blinded their minds, that they cannot see this thing. Howbeit, the Lord Jesus has, as I said, that others might take heart and come to him, given out a commandment, that mercy should in the first place be offered to the biggest sinners. "Begin," saith he, "at Jerusalem." And thus I end the third reason.

Fourthly, Jesus Christ would have mercy offered in the first place to the biggest sinners, because that is the way, if they receive it, most to weaken the kingdom of Satan, and to keep it lowest in every age of the world. The biggest sinners, they are Satan's colonels and captains, the leaders of his people, and they that most stoutly make head against the Son of God. Wherefore let these first be

conquered, and his kingdom will be weak. When Ishbosheth had lost his Abner, his kingdom was made weak : nor did he sit but tottering then upon his throne. So when Satan loseth his strong men, them that are mighty to work iniquity, and dexterous to manage others in the same, then is his kingdom weak ; 2 Sam. iii. Therefore, I say, Christ doth offer mercy in the first place to such, the more to weaken his kingdom. Christ Jesus was glad to see Satan fall like lightning from heaven, that is, suddenly or headlong ; and it was, surely, by casting of him out of strong possessions, and by recovering of some notorious sinners out of his clutches ; Luke x. 17-19.

Samson, when he would pull down the Philistines' temple, took hold of the two main pillars of it, and breaking them, down came the house. Christ came to destroy the works of the devil, and to destroy by converting grace, as well as by redeeming blood. Now sin swarms, and lieth by legions, and whole armies, in the souls of the biggest sinners, as in garrisons : wherefore the way, the most direct way to destroy it, is first to deal with such sinners by the word of his gospel, and by the merits of his passion.

For example, though I shall give you but a homely one : suppose a family to be troubled with vermin, and one or two of the family to be in chief the breeders, the way, the quickest way to clear that family, or at least to weaken the so swarming of those vermin, is, in the first place, to sweeten the skin, head, and clothes of the chief breeders ; and then, though all the family should be apt to breed them, the number of them, and so the greatness of that plague there, will be the more impaired.

Why, there are some people that are in chief the devil's sin-breeders in the towns and places where they live. The place, town, or family where they live, must needs be horribly verminous, as it were, eaten up with vermin. Now, let the Lord Jesus, in the first place, cleanse these great breeders, and there will be given a nip to those swarms of sins that used to be committed in such places throughout

the town, house, or family, where such sin-breeding persons used to be.

I speak by experience: I was one of these verminous ones, one of these great sin-breeders; I infected all the youth of the town where I was born, with all manner of youthful vanities. The neighbours counted me so; my practice proved me so: wherefore Christ Jesus took me first, and taking me first, the contagion was much allayed all the town over. When God made me sigh, they would hearken, and enquiringly say, What is the matter with John? They also gave their various opinions of me: but, as I said, sin cooled, and failed, as to his full career. When I went out to seek the bread of life, some of them would follow, and the rest be put into a muse at home. Yea, almost the town, at first, at times would go out to hear at the place where I found good; yea, young and old for a while had some reformation on them; also some of them, perceiving that God had mercy upon me, came crying to him for mercy too.

But what need I give you an instance of poor I; I will come to Manasseh the king. So long as he was a ring-leading sinner, the great idolater, the chief for devilism, the whole land flowed with wickedness; for he "made them to sin," and do worse than the heathen that dwelt round about them, or that was cast out from before them: but when God converted him, the whole land was reformed. Down went the groves, the idols, and altars of Baal, and up went true religion in much of the power and purity of it. You will say, The king reformed by power. I answer, doubtless, and by example too; for people observe their leaders; as their fathers did, so did they; 2 Chron. xxxiii. 2.

This, therefore, is another reason why Jesus would have mercy offered in the first place to the biggest sinners, because that is the best way, if they receive it, most to weaken the kingdom of Satan, and to keep it poor and low.

And do you not think now, that if God would but take hold of the hearts of some of the most notorious in your town, in your family, or country, that this thing would be

verified before your faces ? It would, it would, to the joy of you that are godly, to the making of hell to sigh, to the great suppressing of sin, the glory of Christ, and the joy of the angels of God. And ministers should, therefore, that this work might go on, take advantages to persuade with the biggest sinners to come into Christ, according to my text, and their commissions ; "Beginning at Jerusalem."

Fifthly, Jesus Christ would have mercy offered, in the first place, to the biggest sinners ; because such, when converted, are usually the best helps in the church against temptations, and fittest for the support of the feeble-minded there. Hence, usually, you have some such in the first plantation of churches, or quickly upon it. Churches would do but sorrily, if Christ Jesus did not put such converts among them : they are the monuments and mirrors of mercy. The very sight of such a sinner in God's house, yea, the very thought of him, where the sight of him cannot be had, is oftentimes greatly for the help of the faith of the feeble.

"When the churches (said Paul) that were in Judea, heard this concerning me, that he which persecuted them in time past, now preached the faith which once he destroyed, they glorified God in me;" Gal. i. 20-24.

"Glorified God." How is that ? Why, they praised him, and took courage to believe the more in the mercy of God ; for that he had had mercy on such a great sinner as he. They glorified God "in me;" they wondered that grace should be so rich, as to take hold of such a wretch as I was ; and for my sake believed in Christ the more.

There are two things that great sinners are acquainted with, when they come to divulge them to the saints, that are a great relief to their faith.

1. The contests that they usually have with the devil at their parting with him.

2. Their knowledge of his secrets in his workings.

For the *first*, The biggest sinners have usually great contests with the devil at their partings ; and this is an help to saints : for ordinary saints find afterwards what

the vile ones find at first, but when at the opening of hearts, the one finds himself to be as the other, the one is a comfort to the other. The lesser sort of sinners find but little of this, till after they have been some time in profession ; but the vile man meets with his at the beginning. Wherefore he, when the other is down, is ready to tell that he has met with the same before ; for, I say, he has had it before. Satan is loath to part with a great sinner. What my true servant (quoth he), my old servant, wilt thou forsake me now ? Having so often sold thyself to me to work wickedness, wilt thou forsake me now ? Thou horrible wretch, dost not know, that thou hast sinned thyself beyond the reach of grace, and dost think to find mercy now ? Art not thou a murderer, a thief, a harlot, a witch, a sinner of the greatest size, and dost thou look for mercy now ? Dost thou think that Christ will foul his fingers with thee ?

'Tis enough to make angels blush, saith Satan, to see so vile a one knock at heaven-gates for mercy, and wilt thou be so abominably bold to do it ? Thus Satan dealt with me, says the great sinner, when at first I came to Jesus Christ. And what did you reply ? saith the tempted. Why, I granted the whole charge to be true, says the other. And what, did you despair, or how ? No, saith he, I said, I am Magdalen, I am Zaccheus, I am the thief, I am the harlot, I am the publican, I am the prodigal, and one of Christ's murderers : yea, worse than any of these ; and yet God was so far off from rejecting of me (as I found afterwards), that there was music and dancing in his house for me, and for joy that I was come home unto him. O blessed be God for grace (says the other), for then I hope there is favour for me. Yea, as I told you, such a one is a continual spectacle in the church, for every one to behold God's grace and wonder by.

Secondly, And as for the secrets of Satan, such as are suggestions to question the being of God, the truth of his word, and to be annoyed with devilish blasphemies ; none more acquainted with these than the biggest sinners at their con-

version ; wherefore thus also they are prepared to be helps in the church to relieve and comfort the other.

I might also here tell you of the contests and battles that such are engaged in, wherein they find the besettings of Satan, above any other of the saints. At which times Satan assaults the soul with darkness, fears, frightful thoughts of apparitions ; now they sweat, pant, cry out, and struggle for life.

The angels now come down to behold the sight, and rejoice to see a bit of dust and ashes to overcome principalities and powers, and might, and dominions. But, as I said, when these come a little to be settled, they are prepared for helping others, and are great comforts unto them. Their great sins give great encouragement to the devil to assault them ; and by these temptations Christ takes advantage to make them the more helpful to the churches.

The biggest sinner, when he is converted, and comes into the church, says to them all, by his very coming in, Behold me, all you that are men and women of a low and timorous spirit, you whose hearts are narrow, for that you never had the advantage to know, because your sins are few, the largeness of the grace of God. Behold, I say, in me, the exceeding riches of his grace ! I am a pattern set forth before your faces, on whom you may look and take heart. This, I say, the great sinner can say, to the exceeding comfort of all the rest.

Wherefore, as I have hinted before, when God intends to stock a place with saints, and to make that place excellently to flourish with the riches of his grace, he usually begins with the conversion of some of the most notorious thereabouts, and lays them as an example to allure others, and to build up when they are converted.

It was Paul that must go to the Gentiles, because Paul was the most outrageous of all the apostles, in the time of his unregeneracy. Yea, Peter must be he, that after his horrible fall, was thought fittest, when recovered again, to comfort and strengthen his brethren. See Luke xxii. 31, 32.

Some must be pillars in God's house ; and if they be pillars of cedar, they must stand while they are stout and sturdy sticks in the forest, before they are cut down, and planted or placed there.

No man, when he buildeth his house, makes the principal parts thereof of weak or feeble timber ; for how could such bear up the rest ? but of great and able wood. Christ Jesus also goeth this way to work ; he makes of the biggest sinners bearers and supporters to the rest. This then, may serve for another reason, why Jesus Christ gives out in commandment, that mercy should, in the first place, be offered to the biggest sinners : because such, when converted, are usually the best helps in the church against temptations, and fittest for the support of the feeble-minded there.

Sixthly, Another reason why Jesus Christ would have mercy offered in the first place to the biggest sinners, is, because they, when converted, are apt to love him most.

This agrees both with Scripture and reason. Scripture says so : " To whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much. To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little ;" Luke vii. 47. Reason says so : for as it would be the unreasonablest thing in the world to render hatred for love, and contempt for forgiveness ; so it would be as ridiculous to think, that the reception of a little kindness should lay the same obligations upon the heart to love, as the reception of a great deal. I would not disparage the love of Christ ; I know the least drachm of it, when it reaches to forgiveness, is great above all the world ; but comparatively, there are greater extensions of the love of Christ to one than to another. He that has most sin, if forgiven, is partaker of the greatest love, of the greatest forgiveness.

I know also, that there are some, that from this very doctrine say, " Let us do evil that good may come ;" and that turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness. But I speak not of these ; these will neither be ruled by grace nor reason. Grace would teach them, if they know it, to deny ungodly courses ; and so would reason too, if it could truly sense the love of God ; Titus ii. 11, 12 ; Rom. xi. 1.

Doth it look like what hath any coherence with reason or mercy, for a man to abuse his friend? Because Christ died for men, shall I therefore spit in his face? The bread and water that was given by Elisha to his enemies, that came into the land of Israel to take him, had so much influence upon their minds, though heathens, that they returned to their homes without hurting him: yea, it kept them from coming again in a hostile manner into the coasts of Israel; 2 Kings vi. 19-23.

But to forbear to illustrate till anon. One reason why Christ Jesus shews mercy to sinners, is, that he might obtain their love, that he may remove their base affections from base objects to himself. Now, if he loves to be loved a little, he loves to be loved much; but there is not any that are capable of loving much, save those that have much forgiven them. Hence it is said of Paul, that he laboured more than them all; to wit, with a labour of love, because he had been by sin more vile against Christ than they all; 1 Cor. xv. He it was that persecuted the church of God, and wasted it; Gal. i. 13. He of them all was the only raving bedlam against the saints: "And being exceeding mad," says he, "against them, I persecuted them, even to strange cities;" Acts xxvi. 11.

This raving bedlam, that once was so, is he that now says, I laboured more than them all, more for Christ than them all.

But Paul, what moved thee thus to do? The love of Christ, says he. It was not I, but the grace of God that was with me. As who should say, O grace! It was such grace to save me! It was such marvellous grace for God to look down from heaven upon me, and that secured me from the wrath to come, that I am captivated with the sense of the riches of it. Hence I act, hence I labour; for how can I otherwise do, since God not only separated me from my sins and companions, but separated all the powers of my soul and body to his service? I am therefore prompted on by this exceeding love to labour as I have done; yet not I, but the grace of God with me.

Oh ! I shall never forget his love, nor the circumstances under which I was, when his love laid hold upon me. I was going to Damascus with letters from the high-priest, to make havock of God's people there, as I had made havock of them in other places. These bloody letters were not imposed upon me. I went to the high-priest and desired them of him ; Acts ix. 1, 2 ; and yet he saved me ! I was one of the men, of the chief men, that had a hand in the blood of his martyr Stephen ; yet he had mercy on me ! When I was at Damascus, I stunk so horribly like a blood-sucker, that I became a terror to all thereabout. Yea, Ananias (good man) made intercession to my Lord against me ; yet he would have mercy upon me, yea, joined mercy to mercy, until he had made me a monument of grace ! He made a saint of me, and persuaded me that my transgressions were forgiven me.

When I began to preach, those that heard me were amazed, and said, " Is not this he that destroyed them that called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound to the high-priest ? " Hell doth know that I was a sinner ; heaven doth know that I was a sinner ; the world also knows that I was a sinner, a sinner of the greatest size ; but I obtained mercy ; 1 Tim i. 15, 16.

Shall not this lay obligation upon me ? Is not love of the greatest force to oblige ? Is it not strong as death, cruel as the grave, and hotter than the coals of juniper ? Hath it not a most vehement flame ? can the waters quench it ? can the floods drown it ? I am under the force of it, and this is my continual cry, What shall I render to the Lord for all the benefits which he has bestowed upon me ?

Ay, Paul ! this is something ; thou speakest like a man, like a man affected, and carried away with the love and grace of God. Now, this sense, and this affection, and this labour, giveth to Christ the love that he looks for. But he might have converted twenty little sinners, and yet not found, for grace bestowed, so much love in them all.

I wonder how far a man might go among the converted

sinners of the smaller size, before one could find one that so much as looked any thing this wayward. Where is he that is thus under pangs of love for the grace bestowed upon him by Jesus Christ? Excepting only some few, you may walk to the world's end, and find none. But, as I said, some there are, and so there has been in every age of the church, great sinners, that have had much forgiven them; and they love much upon this account.

Jesus Christ therefore knows what he doth, when he lays hold on the hearts of sinners of the biggest size. He knows that such an one will love more than many that have not sinned half their sins.

I will tell you a story that I have read of Martha and Mary; the name of the book I have forgot; I mean of the book in which I found the relation; but the thing was thus:

Martha, saith my author, was a very holy woman, much like Lazarus her brother; but Mary was a loose and wanton creature; Martha did seldom miss good sermons and lectures, when she could come at them in Jerusalem; but Mary would frequent the house of sports, and the company of the vilest of men for lust: And though Martha had often desired that her sister would go with her to hear her preachers, yea, had often entreated her with tears to do it, yet could she never prevail; for still Mary would make her excuse, or reject her with disdain for her zeal and preciseness in religion.

After Martha had waited long, tried many ways to bring her sister to good, and all proved ineffectual, at last she comes upon her thus: "Sister," quoth she, "I pray thee go with me to the temple to-day, to hear one preach a sermon." "What kind of preacher is he?" said she. Martha replied, "It is one Jesus of Nazareth; he is the handsomest man that ever you saw with your eyes. Oh! he shines in beauty, and is a most excellent preacher."

Now, what does Mary, after a little pause, but goes up into her chamber, and with her pins and her clouts, decks up herself as fine as her fingers could make her.

This done, away she goes, not with her sister Martha, but as much unobserved as she could, to the sermon, or rather to see the preacher.

The hour and preacher being come, and she having observed whereabouts the preacher would stand, goes and sets herself so in the temple, that she might be sure to have the full view of this excellent person. So he comes in, and she looks, and the first glimpse of his person pleased her. Well, Jesus addresseth himself to his sermon, and she looks earnestly on him.

Now, at that time, saith my author, Jesus preached about the lost sheep, the lost groat, and the prodigal child. And when he came to shew what care the shepherd took for one lost sheep, and how the woman swept to find her piece which was lost, and what joy there was at their finding, she began to be taken by the ears, and forgot what she came about, musing what the preacher would make of it. But when he came to the application, and shewed, that by the lost sheep was meant a great sinner ; by the shepherd's care, was meant God's love for great sinners ; and that by the joy of the neighbours, was shewed what joy there was among the angels in heaven over one great sinner that repenteth ; she began to be taken by the heart. And as he spake these last words, she thought he pitched his innocent eyes just upon her, and looked as if he spake what was now said to her : wherefore her heart began to tremble, being shaken with affection and fear ; then her eyes ran down with tears apace ; wherefore she was forced to hide her face with her handkerchief, and so sat sobbing and crying all the rest of the sermon.

Sermon being done, up she gets, and away she goes, and withal inquired where this Jesus the preacher dined that day ? and one told her, At the house of Simon the Pharisee. So away goes she, first to her chamber, and there strips herself of her wanton attire : then falls upon her knees to ask God forgiveness for all her wicked life. This done, in a modest dress she goes to Simon's house, where she finds Jesus sat at dinner. So she gets behind him, and weeps,

and drops her tears upon his feet like rain, and washes them, and wipes them with the hair of her head. She also kissed his feet with her lips, and anointed them with ointment. When Simon the Pharisee perceived what the woman did, and being ignorant of what it was to be forgiven much (for he never was forgiven more than fifty pence), he began to think within himself, that he had been mistaken about Jesus Christ, because he suffered such a sinner as this woman was, to touch him. Surely, quoth he, this man, if he were a prophet, would not let this woman come near him, for she is a town-sinner (so ignorant are all self-righteous men of the way of Christ with sinners.) But lest Mary should be discouraged with some clownish carriage of this Pharisee and so desert her good beginnings, and her new steps which she now had begun to take towards eternal life, Jesus began thus with Simon: "Simon," saith he, "I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was," said Jesus, "a certain creditor had two debtors; the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thy house, thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint, but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven;" Luke vii. 36-50.

Thus you have the story. If I come short in any circumstance, I beg pardon of those that can correct me. It is three or four and twenty years since I saw the book;

yet I have, as far as my memory will admit, given you the relation of the matter. However Luke, as you see, doth here present you with the substance of the whole.

Alas ! Christ Jesus has but little thanks for the saving of little sinners. "To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." He gets not water for his feet, by his saving of such sinners. There are abundance of dry-eyed Christians in the world, and abundance of dry-eyed duties too ; duties that never were wetted with the tears of contrition and repentance, nor ever sweetened with the great sinner's box of ointment. And the reason is, such sinners have not great sins to be saved from ; or if they have, they look upon them in the diminishing glass of the holy law of God. But I rather believe, that the professors of our days want a due sense of what they are ; for, verily, for the generality of them, both before and since conversion, they have been sinners of a lusty size. But if their eyes be holden, if convictions are not shewn, if their knowledge of their sins is but like to the eye-sight in twilight ; the heart cannot be affected with that grace that has laid hold on the man ; and so Christ Jesus sows much, and has little coming in.

Wherefore his way is oftentimes to step out of the way, to Jericho, to Samaria, to the country of the Gadarenes, to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, and also to Mount Calvary, that he may lay hold of such kind of sinners as will love him to his liking ; Luke xix. 1-11 ; John iv. 3-11 ; Mark v. 1-21 ; Matt. xv. 21-29 ; Luke xxiii. 33-44.

But thus much for the sixth reason, why Christ Jesus would have mercy offered in the first place to the biggest sinners, to wit, because such sinners, when converted, are apt to love him most. The Jerusalem sinners were they that outstripped, when they were converted, in some things, all the churches of the Gentiles. "They were of one heart, and of one soul, neither said any of them, that aught of the things that they possessed was their own." "Neither was there any among them that lacked : for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought

the price of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet," &c ; Acts iv.32-35. Now, shew me such another pattern if you can. But why did these do thus ? Oh ! they were Jerusalem sinners. These were the men that but a little before had killed the Prince of Life ; and those to whom he did, that notwithstanding, send the first offer of grace and mercy. And the sense of this took them up betwixt the earth and the heaven, and carried them on in such ways and methods as could never be trodden by any since. They talk of the church of Rome, and set her in her primitive state, as a pattern and mother of churches ; when the truth is, they were the Jerusalem sinners, when converts, that out-did all the churches that ever were.

Seventhly, Christ Jesus would have mercy offered, in the first place, to the biggest sinners ; because grace when it is received by such, finds matter to kindle upon more freely than it finds in other sinners. Great sinners are like the dry wood, or like great candles, which burn best and shine with biggest light. I lay not this down, as I did those reasons before, to shew, that when great sinners are converted, they will be encouragement to others, though that is true ; but to shew that Christ has a delight to see grace, the grace we receive, to shine. We love to see things that bear a good gloss ; yea, we choose to buy such kind of matter to work upon, as will, if wrought up to what we intend, cast that lustre that we desire.

Candles that burn not bright, we like not : wood that is green will rather smother, and sputter, and smoke, and crack, and flounce, than cast a brave light and a pleasant heat : wherefore great folks care not much, not so much for such kind of things, as for them that will better answer their ends.

Hence Christ desires the biggest sinner ; in him there is matter to work by, to wit, a great deal of sin ; for as by the tallow of the candle, the fire takes occasion to burn the brighter ; so by the sin of the soul, grace takes occasion to shine the clearer. Little candles shine but little, for there wanteth matter for the fire to work upon ; but in the

great sinner, here is more matter for grace to work, by. Faith shines, when it worketh towards Christ, through the sides of many and great transgressors, and so does love, for that much is forgiven. And what matter can be found in the soul for humility to work by so well, as by a sight that I have been and am an abominable sinner? And the same is to be said of patience, meekness, gentleness, self-denial, or of any other grace. Grace takes occasion by the vileness of the man to shine the more; even as by the ruggedness of a very strong distemper or disease, the virtue of the medicine is best made manifest. Where sin abounds, grace much more abounds; Rom. v. 20. A black string makes the neck look whiter; great sins make grace burn clear. Some say, when grace and a good nature meet together, they do make shining Christians: but I say, when grace and a great sinner meet, and when grace shall subdue that great sinner to itself, and shall operate after its kind in the soul of that great sinner, then we have a shining Christian; witness all those of whom mention was made before.

Abraham was among the idolaters when in the land of Assyria, and served idols with his kindred on the other side of the flood; Jos. xxiv. 2; Gen. xi. 31. But who, when called, was there in the world, in whom grace shone so bright as in him?

The Thessalonians were idolaters before the word of God came to them; but when they had received it, they became examples to all that did believe in Macedonia and Achaia; 1 Thess. i. 6-10.

God the Father, and Jesus Christ his Son, are for having things seen, for having the word of life held forth. They light not a candle that it might be put under a bushel, or under a bed, but on a candlestick, that all that come in may see the light; Matt. v. 15; Mark iv. 21; Luke viii. 16; chap. xi. 33.

And, I say, as I said before, in whom is light like so to shine, as in the souls of great sinners?

When the Jewish Pharisees dallied with the gospel, Christ threatened to take it from them, and to give it to

the barbarous heathens and idolaters. Why so ? For they, saith he, will bring forth the fruits thereof in their season : " Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof ;" Matt. xxi. 41-43.

I have often marvelled at our youth, and said in my heart, What should be the reason that they should be so generally at this day debauched as they are ? For they are now profane to amazement ; and sometimes I have thought one thing, and sometimes another ; that is, why God should suffer it so to be. At last I have thought of this : How if the God, whose ways are past finding out, should suffer it so to be now, that he might make of some of them the more glorious saints hereafter. I know sin is of the devil, but it cannot work in the world without permission : and if it happens to be as I have thought, it will not be the first time that God the Lord hath caught Satan in his own design. For my part, I believe that the time is at hand, that we shall see better saints in the world than has been seen in it this many a day. And this vileness, that at present does so much swallow up our youth, is one cause of my thinking so : for out of them, for from among them, when God sets to his hand, as of old, you shall see what penitent ones, what trembling ones, and what admirers of grace, will be found to profess the gospel to the glory of God by Christ.

Alas ! we are a company of worn-out Christians, our moon is in the wane ; we are much more black than white, more dark than light ; we shine but a little ; grace in the most of us is decayed. But I say, when they of these debauched ones that are to be saved shall be brought in, when these that look more like devils than men shall be converted to Christ (and I believe several of them will), then will Christ be exalted, grace adored, the word prized, Zion's path better trodden, and men in the pursuit of their own salvation, to the amazement of them that are left behind.

Just before Christ came into the flesh, the world was degenerated as it is now : the generality of the men in

Jerusalem, were become either high and famous for hypocrisy, or filthy base in their lives. The devil also was broke loose in a hideous manner, and had taken possession of many: yea, I believe that there was never generation before nor since, that could produce so many possessed with devils, deformed, lame, blind, and infected with monstrous diseases, as that generation could. But what was the reason thereof, I mean the reason from God? Why one (and we may sum up more in that answer that Christ gave to his disciples concerning him that was born blind) was, that the works of God might be made manifest in them, and that the Son of God might be glorified thereby, John ix. 2, 3; chap. xi. 4.

Now if these devils and diseases, as they possessed men then, were to make way and work for an approaching Christ in person, and for the declaring of his power, why may we not think that now, even now also, he is ready to come by his Spirit in the gospel to heal many of the debaucheries of our age? I cannot believe that grace will take them all, for there are but few that are saved; but yet it will take some, even some of the worst of men, and make blessed ones of them. But, O how these ringleaders in vice will then shine in virtue! They will be the very pillars in churches, they will be as an ensign in the land. "The Lord their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people: for they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon his land;" Zech. ix. 16. But who are these? Even idolatrous Ephraim, and back-sliding Judah; ver. 13.

I know there is ground to fear, that the iniquity of this generation will be pursued with heavy judgments: but that will not hinder what we have supposed. God took him a glorious church out of bloody Jerusalem, yea, out of the chief of the sinners there, and left the rest to be taken and spoiled, and sold, thirty for a penny, in the nations where they were captives. The gospel working gloriously in a place, to the seizing upon many of the ringleading sinners thereof, promiseth no security to the rest, but rather

threateneth them with the heaviest and smartest judgments ; as in the instance now given, we have a full demonstration ; but in defending, the Lord will defend his people ; and in saving, he will save his inheritance.

Nor does this speak any great comfort to a decayed and backsliding sort of Christians ; for the next time God rides post with his gospel, he will leave such Christians behind him. But I say, Christ is resolved to set up his light in the world ; yea, he is delighted to see his graces shine ; and therefore he commands that his gospel should to that end be offered, in the first place, to the biggest sinners ; for by great sins it shineth most ; therefore he saith, " Begin at Jerusalem."

Eighthly, and lastly, Christ Jesus will have mercy to be offered in the first place to the biggest sinners ; for that by that means the impenitent that are left behind will be at the judgment the more left without excuse.

God's word has two edges ; it can cut back-stroke and fore-stroke : if it doth thee no good, it will do thee hurt ; it is the savour of life unto life to those that receive it, but of death unto death to them that refuse it ; 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16. But this is not all ; the tender of grace to the biggest sinners in the first place, will not only leave the rest, or those that refuse it, in a deplorable condition, but will also stop their mouths, and cut off all pretence to excuse at that day. " If I had not come and spoken unto them," saith Christ, " they had not had sin ; but now they have no cloak for their sin," for their sin of persevering in impenitence ; Job xv. 22.

But what did he speak to them ? Why, even that which I have told you ; to wit, That he has in special a delight in saving the biggest sinners. He spake this in the way of his doctrine ; he spake this in the way of his practice, even to the pouring out of his last breath before them ; Luke xxiii. 34.

Now, since this is so, what can the condemned at the judgment say for themselves, why sentence of death should not be passed upon them ? I say, what excuse can they

make for themselves, when they shall be asked why they did not in the day of salvation come to Christ to be saved? Will they have ground to say to the Lord, Thou wast only for saving of little sinners; and therefore because they were great ones, they durst not come unto him? or that thou hadst not compassion for the biggest sinners, therefore I died in despair? Will these be excuses for them, as the case now standeth with them? Is there not every where in God's book a flat contradiction to this, in multitudes of promises, of invitations, of examples, and the like? Alas, alas! there will then be there millions of souls to confute this plea; ready, I say, to stand up, and say, O! deceived world, heaven swarms with such, as were, when they were in the world, to the full as bad as you.

Now, this will kill all plea or excuse, why they should perish in their sins; yea, the text says, they shall see them there. "There shall be weeping, when you shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of heaven, and you yourselves thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God;" Luke xiii. 28, 29. Out of which company it is easy to pick such as sometimes were as bad people as any that now breathe on the face of the earth. What think you of the first man, by whose sins there are millions now in hell? And so I may say, What think you of ten thousand more besides?

But if the world will not stifle and gag them up (I speak now for amplification's sake), the view of those who are saved shall.

There comes an incestuous person to the bar, and pleads, That the bigness of his sins was a bar to his receiving the promise. But will not his mouth be stopped as to that, when Lot and the incestuous Corinthian shall be set before him; Gen. xix. 33-37; 1 Cor. v. 1, 2.

There comes a thief, and says, Lord, my sin of theft, I thought, was such as could not be pardoned by thee! But when he shall see the thief that was saved on the cross

stand by, as clothed with beauteous glory, what further can he be able to object? Yea, the Lord will produce ten thousand of his saints at his coming, who shall after this manner execute judgment upon all, and so convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. And these are hard speeches against him, to say that he was not able or willing to save men, because of the greatness of their sins, or to say that they were discouraged by his word from repentance, because of the heinousness of their offences.

These things, I say, shall then be confuted: he comes with ten thousand of his saints to confute them, and to stop their mouths from making objections against their own eternal damnation.

Here is Adam, the destroyer of the world; here is Lot, that lay with both his daughters; here is Abraham, that was sometime an idolater, and Jacob, that was a supplanter, and Reuben, that lay with his father's concubine, and Judah that lay with his daughter-in-law, and Levi and Simeon that wickedly slew the Shechemites, and Aaron that made an idol to be worshipped, and that proclaimed a religious feast unto it. Here is also Rachab the harlot, and Bathsheba that bare a bastard to David. Here is Solomon that great backslider, and Manasseh that man of blood and a witch. Time would fail me to tell you of the woman of Canaan's daughter, of Mary Magdalen, of Matthew the publican, and of Gideon and Sampson, and many thousands more.

Alas! alas! I say, what will these sinners do, that have, through their unbelief, eclipsed the glorious largeness of the mercy of God, and gave way to despair of salvation, because of the bigness of their sins?

For all these, though now glorious saints in light, were sometimes sinners of the biggest size, who had sins that were of a notorious hue; yet now, I say, they are in their shining and heavenly robes before the throne of God and of the Lamb, blessing for ever and ever that Son of God for

their salvation, who died for them upon the tree ; admiring that ever it should come into their hearts once to think of coming to God by Christ ; but above all, blessing God for granting of them light to see those encouragements in his testament ; without which, without doubt, they had been daunted and sunk down under guilt of sin and despair, as their fellow-sinners have done.

But now they also are witnesses for God, and for his grace against an unbelieving world ; for, as I said, they shall come to convince the world of their speeches, their hard and unbelieving words, that they have spoken concerning the mercy of God, and the merits of the passion of his blessed Son Jesus Christ.

But will it not, think you, strangely put to silence all such thoughts, and words, and reasonings of the ungodly before the bar of God ? Doubtless it will ; yea and will send them away from his presence also, with the greatest guilt that possibly can fasten upon the consciences of men.

For what will sting like this ?—I have, through mine own foolish, narrow, unworthy, undervaluing thoughts, of the love and ability of Christ to save me, brought myself to everlasting ruin. It is true, I was a horrible sinner ; not one in a hundred did live so vile a life as I : but this should not have kept me from closing with Jesus Christ : I see now that there are abundance in glory that once were as bad as I have been : but they were saved by faith, and I am damned by unbelief.

Wretch that I am ! why did not I give glory to the redeeming blood of Jesus ? Why did I not humbly cast my soul at his blessed footstool for mercy ? Why did I judge of his ability to save me by the voice of my shallow reason, and the voice of a guilty conscience ? Why betook not I myself to the holy word of God ? Why did I not read and pray that I might understand, since now I perceive that God said then, he giveth liberally to them that pray, and upbraideth not ; Jam. i. 5.

It is rational to think, that by such cogitations as these the unbelieving world will be torn in pieces before the

judgment of Christ ; especially those that have lived where they did or might have heard the gospel of the grace of God. Oh ! that saying, " It shall be more tolerable for Sodom at the judgment than for them," will be better understood. See Luke x. 8-12.

This reason, therefore, standeth fast ; namely, that Christ, by offering mercy in the first place to the biggest sinners now, will stop all mouths of the impenitent at the day of judgment, and cut off all excuse that shall be attempted to be made (from the thoughts of the greatness of their sins) why they came not to him.

I have often thought of the day of judgment, and how God will deal with sinners at that day ; and I believe it will be managed with that sweetness, with that equitableness, with that excellent righteousness, as to every sin, and circumstance, and aggravation thereof, that men that are damned, before the judgment is over shall receive such conviction of the righteous judgment of God upon them, and of their deserts of hell-fire, that they shall in themselves conclude that there is all the reason in the world that they should be shut out of heaven, and go to hell-fire : " These shall go away into everlasting punishment ;" Matt. xxv. 46.

Only this will tear them, that they have missed of mercy and glory, and obtained everlasting damnation through their unbelief ; but it will tear but themselves, but their own souls ; they will gnash upon themselves ; for in that mercy was offered to the chief of them in the first place, and yet they were damned for rejecting of it ; they were damned for forsaking what they had a sort of propriety in ; for forsaking their own mercy.

And thus much for the reasons. I will conclude with a word of application.

THE APPLICATION.

First, Would Jesus Christ have mercy offered in the first place to the biggest sinners ? then this shews us how to make a right judgment of the heart of Christ to men. In-

deed we have advantage to guess at the goodness of his heart, by many things ; as by his taking our nature upon him, his dying for us, his sending his word and ministers to us, and all that we might be saved. But this of beginning to offer mercy to Jerusalem, is that which heightens all the rest ; for this doth not only confirm to us, that love was the cause of his dying for us, but it shews us yet more the depth of that love. He might have died for us, and yet have extended the benefit of his death to a few, as one might call them, of the best conditioned sinners, to those who, though they were weak, and could not but sin, yet made not a trade of sinning ; to those that sinned not lavishly. There are in the world, as one may call them, the moderate sinners ; the sinners that mix righteousness with their pollutions ; the sinners that though they be sinners, do what on their part lies (some that are blind would think so) that they might be saved. I say, it had been love, great love, if he had died for none but such, and sent his love to such : but that he should send out conditions of peace to the biggest of sinners ; yea, that they should be offered to them first of all ; (for so he means when he says, "Begin at Jerusalem ;") this is wonderful ! this shews his heart to purpose, as also the heart of God his Father, who sent him to do thus.

There is nothing more incident to men that are awake in their souls, than to have wrong thoughts of God ; thoughts that are narrow, and that pinch and pen up his mercy to scanty and beggarly conclusions, and rigid legal conditions ; supposing that it is rude, and an intrenching upon his majesty, to come ourselves, or to invite others, until we have scraped and washed, and rubbed off as much of our dirt from us as we think is convenient, to make us somewhat orderly and handsome in his sight. Such never knew what these words meant, "Begin at Jerusalem : " yea, such in their hearts have compared the Father and his Son to niggardly rich men, whose money comes from them like drops of blood. True, says such, God has mercy, but he is loath to part with it ; you must please him well,

if you get any from him ; he is not so free as many suppose, nor is he so willing to save as some pretended gossellers imagine. But I ask such, if the Father and Son be not unspeakably free to shew mercy, why was this clause put into our commission to preach the gospel ? Yea, why did he say, "Begin at Jerusalem : " for when men, through the weakness of their wits, have attempted to shew other reasons why they should have the first proffer of mercy ; yet I can prove (by many undeniable reasons) that they of Jerusalem (to whom the apostles made the first offer, according as they were commanded) were the biggest sinners that ever did breathe upon the face of God's earth, (set the unpardonable sin aside), upon which my doctrine stands like a rock, that Jesus the Son of God would have mercy in the first place offered to the biggest sinners : and if this doth not shew the heart of the Father and the Son to be infinitely free in bestowing forgiveness of sins, I confess myself mistaken.

Neither is there, set this aside, another argument like it, to shew us the willingness of Christ to save sinners ; for, as was said before, all the rest of the signs of Christ's mercifulness might have been limited to sinners that are so and so qualified ; but when he says, "Begin at Jerusalem," the line is stretched out to the utmost : no man can imagine beyond it ; and it is folly here to pinch and pare, to narrow, and seek to bring it within scanty bounds ; for he plainly saith, "Begin at Jerusalem," the biggest sinner is the biggest sinner ; the biggest is the Jerusalem sinner.

It is true, he saith, that repentance and remission of sins must go together, but yet remission is sent to the chief, the Jerusalem sinner ; nor doth repentance lessen at all the Jerusalem sinner's crimes ; it diminisheth none of his sins, nor causes that there should be so much as half a one the fewer : it only puts a stop to the Jerusalem sinner's course, and makes him willing to be saved freely by grace ; and for time to come to be governed by that blessed word that has brought the tidings of good things to him.

Besides, no man shews himself willing to be saved that

repenteth not of his deeds ; for he that goes on still in his trespasses, declares that he is resolved to pursue his own damnation further.

Learn then to judge of the largeness of God's heart, and of the heart of his Son Jesus Christ, by the word ; judge not thereof by feeling, nor by the reports of thy conscience ; conscience is oftentimes here befooled and made to go quite beside the word. It was judging without the word that made David say, I am cast off from God's eyes, and shall perish one day by the hand of Saul ; Psalm xxxi. 22 ; 1 Sam. xxvii. 1.

The word had told him another thing ; namely, that he should be king in his stead. Our text says also, that Jesus Christ bids preachers, in their preaching repentance and remission of sins, begin first at Jerusalem, thereby declaring most truly the infinite largeness of the merciful heart of God and his Son, to the sinful children of men.

Judge thou, I say, therefore, of the goodness of the heart of God and his Son, by this text, and by others of the same import ; so shalt thou not dishonour the grace of God, nor needlessly fright thyself, nor give away thy faith, nor gratify the devil, nor lose the benefit of his word. I speak now to weak believers.

Secondly, Would Jesus Christ have mercy offered in the first place to the biggest sinners, to the Jerusalem sinners ? then, by this also, you must learn to judge of the sufficiency of the merits of Christ ; not that the merits of Christ can be comprehended, for that they are beyond the conceptions of the whole world, being called the unsearchable riches of Christ ; but yet they may be apprehended to a considerable degree. Now, the way to apprehend them most, is, to consider what offers, after his resurrection, he makes of his grace to sinners ; for to be sure he will not offer beyond the virtue of his merits ; because, as grace is the cause of his merits, so his merits are the basis and bounds upon and by which his grace stands good, and is let out to sinners. Doth he then command that his mercy should be offered in the first place to the biggest sinners ? It declares, that

there is sufficiency in his blood to save the biggest sinners. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin. And again, "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man (this man's merits) is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses;" Acts xiii. 38.

Observe then thy rule to make judgment of the sufficiency of the blessed merits of thy Saviour. If he had not been able to have reconciled the biggest sinners to his Father by his blood, he would not have sent to them, have sent to them in the first place, the doctrine of remission of sins; for remission of sins is through faith in his blood. We are justified freely by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in the blood of Christ. Upon the square, as I may call it, of the worthiness of the blood of Christ, grace acts, and offers forgiveness of sin to men; Eph. i. 7; chap. ii. 13, 14; Col. i. 20-22.

Hence, therefore, we must gather, that the blood of Christ is of infinite value, for that he offereth mercy to the biggest of sinners. Nay, further, since he offereth mercy in the first place to the biggest sinners, considering also, that this first act of his is that which the world will take notice of, and expect it should be continued unto the end. Also it is a disparagement to a man that seeks his own glory in what he undertakes, to do that for a sport, which he cannot continue and hold out in. This is our Lord's own argument, "He began to build," saith he, "but was not able to finish;" Luke xiv. 28.

Shouldst thou hear a man say, I am resolved to be kind to the poor, and should begin with giving handfuls of guineas, you would conclude, that either he is wonderful rich, or must straiten his hand, or will soon be at the bottom of his riches. Why, this is the case: Christ, at his resurrection, gave it out that he would be good to the world; and first sends to the biggest sinners, with an intent to have mercy on them. Now, the biggest sinners cannot be saved but by abundance of grace; it is not a

little that will save great sinners ; Rom. v. 17. And I say again, since the Lord Jesus mounts thus high at the first, and sends to the Jerusalem sinners, that they may come first to partake of his mercy, it follows, that either he has unsearchable riches of grace and worth in himself, or else he must straiten his hand, or his grace and merits will be spent before the world is at an end. But let it be believed, as surely as spoken, he is still as full as ever. He is not a jot the poorer for all the forgivenesses that he has given away to great sinners. Also he is still as free as at first ; for he never yet called back this word, *Begin at the Jerusalem sinners*. And, as I said before, since his grace is extended according to the worth of his merits, I conclude, that there is the same virtue in his merits to save now, as there was at the very beginning.

Oh ! the riches of the grace of Christ ! Oh ! the riches of the blood of Christ !

Thirdly, Would Jesus Christ have mercy offered in the first place to the biggest sinners, then here is encouragement for you that think, for wicked hearts and lives, you have not your fellows in the world, yet to come to him.

There is a people that therefore fear lest they should be rejected of Jesus Christ, because of the greatness of their sins ; when, as you see here, such are sent to, sent to by Jesus Christ to come to him for mercy, "*Begin at Jerusalem.*" Never did one thing answer another more fitly in this world, than this text fitteth such kind of sinners. As face answereth face in a glass, so this text answereth the necessities of such sinners. What can a man say more, but that he stands in the rank of the biggest sinners ? let him stretch himself whither he can, and think of himself to the utmost, he can but conclude himself to be one of the biggest sinners. And what then ? Why the text meets him in the very face, and saith, Christ offereth mercy to the biggest sinners, to the very Jerusalem sinners. What more can be objected ? Nay, he doth not only offer to such his mercy, but to them it is commanded to be offered in the first place ; "*Begin at Jerusalem.*" Preach repentance and

remission of sins among all nations. "Begin at Jerusalem." Is not here encouragement for those that think, for wicked hearts and lives, they have not their fellows in the world?

Object. But I have a heart as hard as a rock.

Answ. Well, but this doth but prove thee a bigger sinner.

Object. But my heart continually frets against the Lord.

Answ. Well, this doth but prove thee a bigger sinner.

Object. But I have been desperate in sinful courses.

Answ. Well, stand thou with the number of the biggest sinners.

Object. But my grey head is found in the way of wickedness.

Answ. Well, thou art in the rank of the biggest sinners.

Object. But I have not only a base heart, but I have lived a debauched life.

Answ. Stand thou also among those that are called the biggest sinners. And what then? Why the text swoops you all; you cannot object yourselves beyond the text. It has a particular message to the biggest sinners. I say, it swoops you all.

Object. But I am a reprobate.

Answ. Now thou talkest like a fool, and of that thou understandest not: no sin, but the sin of final impenitence, can prove a man a reprobate; and I am sure thou hast not arrived as yet unto that; therefore thou understandest not what thou sayest, and makest groundless conclusions against thyself. Say thou art a sinner, and I will hold with thee; say thou art a great sinner, and I will say so too; yea, say thou art one of the biggest sinners, and spare not; for the text yet is beyond thee, is yet betwixt hell and thee; "Begin at Jerusalem," has yet a smile upon thee; and thou talkest as if thou wast a reprobate, and that the greatness of thy sins do prove thee so to be, when yet they of Jerusalem were not such, whose sins, I dare say, were such, both for bigness and heinousness, as thou art incapable of committing beyond them; unless now, after thou hast received, conviction that the Lord Jesus is the only Saviour

of the world, thou shouldst wickedly and despitefully turn thyself from him, and conclude he is not to be trusted to for life, and so crucify him for a cheat afresh. This, I must confess, will bring a man under the black rod, and set him in danger of eternal damnation; Heb. vi. 6: chap. x. 29. This is trampling under foot the Son of God, and counting his blood an unholy thing. This did they of Jerusalem; but they did it ignorantly in unbelief, and so were yet capable of mercy: but to do this against professed light, and to stand to it, puts a man beyond the text indeed; Acts iii. 14-17; 1 Tim. i. 13.

But I say, what is this to him that would fain be saved by Christ? His sins did, as to greatness, never yet reach to the nature of the sins that the sinners intended by the text, had made themselves guilty of. He that would be saved by Christ, has an honourable esteem of him; but they of Jerusalem preferred a murderer before him; but as for him, they cried, Away, away with him, it is not fit that he should live. Perhaps thou wilt object, That thyself hast a thousand times preferred a stinking lust before him: I answer, Be it so; it is but what is common to men to do; nor doth the Lord Jesus make such a foolish life a bar to thee, to forbid thy coming to him, or a bond to his grace, that it might be kept from thee; but admits of thy repentance, and offereth himself unto thee freely, as thou standest among the Jerusalem sinners.

Take therefore encouragement, man, mercy is, by the text, held forth to the biggest sinners; yea, put thyself into the number of the worst, by reckoning that thou mayst be one of the first, and mayst not be put off till the biggest sinners are served; for the biggest sinners are first invited; consequently, if they come, they are like to be the first that shall be served. It was so with Jerusalem; Jerusalem sinners were they that were first invited, and those of them that came first (and there came three thousand of them the first day they were invited; how many came afterwards none can tell), they were first served.

Put in thy name, man, among the biggest, lest thou art

made to wait till they are served. You have some men that think themselves very cunning, because they put up their names in their prayers among them that feign it, saying, God, I thank thee I am not so bad as the worst. But believe it, if they be saved at all, they shall be saved in the last place. The first in their own eyes shall be served last ; and the last or worst shall be first. The text insinuates it, "Begin at Jerusalem ;" and reason backs it, for they have most need. Behold ye, therefore, how God's ways are above ours ; we are for serving the worst last, God is for serving the worst first. The man at the pool, that to my thinking was longest in his disease, and most helpless as to his cure, was first healed ; yea, he only was healed ; for we read that Christ healed him, but we read not then that he healed one more there ! John v. 1-10.

Wherefore, if thou wouldst soonest be served, put in thy name among the very worst of sinners. Say, when thou art upon thy knees, Lord, here is a Jerusalem sinner ! a sinner of the biggest size ! one whose burden is of the greatest bulk and heaviest weight ! one that cannot stand long without sinking into hell, without thy supporting hand ! "Be not thou far from me, O Lord ! O my strength, haste thou to help me !"

I say, put in thy name with Magdalen, with Manasseh, that thou mayst fare as the Magdalen and the Manasseh sinners do. The man in the gospel made the desperate condition of his child an argument with Christ to haste his cure : "Sir, come down," saith he, "ere my child die ;" John iv. 49, and Christ regarded his haste, saying, "Go thy way ; thy son liveth ;" ver. 50. Haste requires haste. David was for speed ; "Deliver me speedily ;" "Hear me speedily ;" "Answer me speedily ;" Psalm xxxi. 2 ; lxix. 17 ; cii. 2. But why speedily ? I am in "the net ;" "I am in trouble ;" "My days are consumed like smoke ;" Psalm xxxi. 4 ; lxix. 17 ; cii. 3. Deep calleth unto deep, necessity calls for help ; great necessity for present help.

Wherefore, I say, be ruled by me in this matter ; feign not thyself another man, if thou hast been a filthy sinner,

but go in thy colours to Jesus Christ, and put thyself among the most vile, and let him alone to put thee among the children ; Jer. iii. 19. Confess all that thou knowest of thyself ; I know thou wilt find it hard work to do thus ; especially if thy mind be legal ; but do it, lest thou stay and be deferred with the little sinners, until the great ones have had their alms. What do you think David intended when he said, his wounds stunk and were corrupted, but to hasten God to have mercy upon him, and not to defer his cure ? “ Lord,” says he, “ I am troubled ; I am bowed down greatly ; I go mourning all the day long.” “ I am feeble and sore broken, by reason of the disquietness of my heart ;” Psalm xxxviii. 3-8.

David knew what he did by all this ; he knew that his making the worst of his case, was the way to speedy help, and that a feigning and dissembling the matter with God, was the next way to a demur as to his forgiveness.

I have one thing more to offer for thy encouragement, who deemest thyself one of the biggest sinners ; and that is, thou art as it were called by thy name, in the first place, to come in for mercy. Thou man of Jerusalem, hearken to thy call ; men do so in courts of judicature, and presently cry out, Here, Sir ; and then they shoulder and crowd, and say, Pray give way, I am called into the court. Why, this is thy case, thou great, thou Jerusalem sinner ; be of good cheer, he calleth thee ; Mark x. 46-49. Why sittest thou still ? arise : why standest thou still ? come man, thy call should give thee authority to come. “ Begin at Jerusalem,” is thy call and authority to come ; wherefore up and shoulder it, man ; say, Stand away, devil, Christ calls me ; stand away unbelief, Christ calls me ; stand away all ye my discouraging apprehensions, for my Saviour calls me to him to receive of his mercy. Men will do thus, as I said, in courts below ; and why shouldst not thou approach thus to the court above ? The Jerusalem sinner is first in thought, first in commission, first in the record of names ; and therefore should give attendance with expectation, that he is first to receive mercy of God.

Is not this an encouragement to the biggest sinners to make their application to Christ for mercy? "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden," doth also confirm this thing; that is, that the biggest sinner, and he that has the biggest burden, is he who is first invited. Christ pointeth over the heads of thousands, as he sits on the throne of grace, directly to such a man; and says, Bring in hither the maimed, the halt, and the blind; let the Jerusalem sinner that stands there behind come to me. Wherefore, since Christ says, Come, to thee, let the angels make a lane, and let all men give place, that the Jerusalem sinner may come to Jesus Christ for mercy.

Fourthly, Would Jesus Christ have mercy offered, in the first place, to the biggest sinners? Then come thou profane wretch, and let me a little enter into an argument with thee. Why wilt thou not come to Jesus Christ, since thou art a Jerusalem sinner? How canst thou find in thy heart to set thyself against grace, against such grace as offereth mercy to thee? What spirit possesseth thee, and holds thee back from a sincere closure with thy Saviour? Behold God groaningly complains of thee, saying, "But Israel would none of me." "When I called, none did answer;" Ps. lxxxix. 11; Isa. lxvi. 4.

Shall God enter this complaint against thee? Why dost thou put him off? Why dost thou stop thine ear? Canst thou defend thyself? When thou art called to an account for thy neglects of so great salvation, what canst thou answer? or doest thou think thou shalt escape the judgment? Heb. ii. 3.

No more such Christs! There will be no more such Christs, sinner! Oh, put not the day, the day of grace, away from thee! if it be once gone, it will never come again, sinner.

But what is it that has got thy heart, and that keeps it from thy Saviour? "Who in the heaven can be compared unto the Lord? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord?" Ps. lxxxix. 6. Hast thou, thinkest thou, found anything so good as Jesus Christ?

Is there any among thy sins, thy companions, and foolish delights, that like Christ can help thee in the day of thy distress? Behold, the greatness of thy sins cannot hinder; let not the stubbornness of thy heart hinder thee, sinner.

Object. But I am ashamed.

Ans. Oh! Do not be ashamed to be saved, sinner.

Object. But my old companions will mock me.

Ans. Oh! Do not be mocked out of eternal life, sinner.

Thy stubbornness affects, afflicts the heart of thy Saviour. Carest thou not for this? Of old he beheld the city, and wept over it. Canst thou hear this, and not be concerned? Luke xix. 41, 42. Shall Christ weep to see thy soul going on to destruction, and wilt thou sport thyself in that way? Yea, shall Christ, that can be eternally happy without thee, be more afflicted at the thoughts of the loss of thy soul, than thyself, who art certainly eternally miserable if thou neglectest to come to him.

Those things that keep thee and thy Saviour, on thy part asunder, are but bubbles; the least prick of an affliction will let out, as to thee, what now thou thinkest is worth the venture of heaven to enjoy.

Hast thou not reason? Canst thou not so much as once soberly think of thy dying hour, or of whither thy sinful life will drive thee then? Hast thou no conscience? or having one, is it rocked so fast asleep by sin, or made so weary with an unsuccessful calling upon thee, that it is laid down, and cares for thee no more? Poor man! thy state is to be lamented. Hast no judgment? Art not able to conclude, that to be saved is better than to burn in hell? and that eternal life, with God's favour, is better than a temporal life in God's displeasure? Hast no affection but what is brutish? what, none at all? no affection for the God that made thee? what! none for his loving Son that has shewed his love, and died for thee? Is not heaven worth thy affection? O poor man! which is strongest thinkest thou, God or thee? If thou art not able to overcome him, thou art a fool for standing out against him; Matt. v. 25, 26. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the

hands of the living God." He will gripe hard ; his fist is stronger than a lion's paw ; take heed of him, he will be angry if you despise his Son ; and will you stand guilty in your trespasses, when he offereth you his grace and favour ? Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7 ; Heb. x. 29-31.

Now we come to the text, " Beginning at Jerusalem." This text, though it be now one of the brightest stars that shineth in the Bible, because there is in it, as full, if not the fullest offer of grace that can be imagined, to the sons of men ; yet to them that shall perish from under this word, even this text will be to such, one of the hottest coals in hell.

This text, therefore, will save thee or sink thee : there is no shifting of it : if it saves thee, it will set thee high ; if it sinks thee, it will set thee low.

But, I say, why so unconcerned ? Hast no soul ? or dost think thou mayst lose thy soul, and save thyself ? Is it not pity, had it otherwise been the will of God, that ever thou wast made a man, for that thou settest so little by thy soul ?

Sinner, take the invitation ; thou art called upon to come to Christ : nor art thou called upon but by order from the Son of God though thou shouldst happen to come of the biggest sinners ; for he has bid us offer mercy, as to all the world in general, so, in the first place, to the sinners of Jerusalem, or to the biggest sinners.

Fifthly, Would Jesus Christ have mercy offered in the first place, to the biggest sinners ? then this shews how unreasonable a thing it is for men to despair of mercy : for those that presume, I shall say something to them afterward.

I now speak to them that despair.

There are four sorts of despair. There is the despair of devils ; there is the despair of souls in hell ; there is the despair that is grounded upon men's deficiency ; and there is the despair that they are perplexed with that are willing to be saved, but are too strongly borne down with the burthen of their sins.

The despair of devils, the damned's despair, and that despair that a man has of attaining of life because of his own deficiency, are all unreasonable. Why should not devils and damned souls despair? yea, why should not man despair of getting to heaven by his own abilities? I therefore am concerned only with the fourth sort of despair, to wit, with the despair of those that would be saved, but are too strongly borne down with the burden of their sins.

I say, therefore, to thee that art thus, And why despair? Thy despair, if it were reasonable, should flow from thee, because found in the land that is beyond the grave, or because thou certainly knowest that Christ will not, or cannot save thee.

But for the first, thou art yet in the land of the living; and for the second, thou hast ground to believe the quite contrary; Christ is able to save to the uttermost them that come to God by him; and if he were not willing, he would not have commanded that mercy, in the first place, should be offered to the biggest sinners. Besides, he hath said, "And let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely;" that is, with all my heart. What ground now is here for despair? If thou sayst, The number and burden of my sins; I answer, Nay; that is rather a ground for faith: because such an one, above all others, is invited by Christ to come unto him, yea, promised rest and forgiveness if they come; Matt. xi. 28. What ground then to despair? Verily none at all. Thy despair then is a thing unreasonable and without footing in the word.

But I have no experience of God's love; God hath given me no comfort, or ground of hope, though I have waited upon him for it many a day.

Thou hast experience of God's love, for that he has opened thine eyes to see thy sins: and for that he has given thee desires to be saved by Jesus Christ. For by thy sense of sin thou art made to see thy poverty of spirit, and that has laid thee under a sure ground to hope that heaven shall be thine hereafter.

Also thy desires to be saved by Christ, has put thee under another promise, so there is two to hold thee up in them, though thy present burden be never so heavy, Matt. v. 3, 6. As for what thou sayst, as to God's silence to thee, perhaps he has spoken to thee once or twice already, but thou hast not perceived it; Job xxxiii. 14, 15.

However, thou hast Christ crucified, set forth before thine eyes in the Bible, and an invitation to come unto him, though thou be a Jerusalem sinner, though thou be the biggest sinner; and so no ground to despair. What, if God will be silent to thee, is that ground of despair? Not at all, so long as there is a promise in the Bible that God will in no wise cast away the coming sinner, and so long as he invites the Jerusalem sinner to come unto him; John vi. 37.

Build not therefore despair upon these things; they are no sufficient foundations for it, such plenty of promises being in the Bible, and such a discovery of his mercy to great sinners of old; especially since we have withal a clause in the commission given to ministers to preach, that they should begin with the Jerusalem sinners in their offering of mercy to the world.

Besides, God says, They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles; but perhaps it may be long first. "I waited long," saith David, "and did seek the Lord;" and at length his cry was heard: wherefore he bids his soul wait on God, and says, For it is good so to do before thy saints; Psalm xl. 1; lxii. 5; lii. 9.

And what if thou waitest upon God all thy days? Is it below thee? And what if God will cross his book, and blot out the hand-writing that is against thee, and not let thee know it as yet? Is it fit to say unto God, Thou art hard-hearted? Despair not; thou hast no ground to despair, so long as thou livest in this world. It is a sin to begin to despair before one sets his foot over the threshold of hell-gates. For them that are there, let them despair and spare not; but as for thee, thou hast no

ground to do it. What! despair of bread in a land that is full of corn! despair of mercy when our God is full of mercy! despair of mercy, when God goes about by his ministers, beseeching of sinners to be reconciled unto him! 2 Cor. v. 18-20.

Thou scrupulous fool, where canst thou find that God was ever false to his promise, or that he ever deceived the soul that ventured itself upon him? He often calls upon sinners to trust him, though they walk in darkness, and have no light; Isa. l. 10.

They have his promise and oath for their salvation, that flee for refuge to the hope set before them; Heb. vi. 17, 18.

Despair! when we have a God of mercy, and a redeeming Christ alive! For shame, forbear: let them despair that dwell where there is no God, and that are confined to those chambers of death which can be reached by no redemption.

A living man despair when he is chid for murmuring and complaining! Lam. iii. 39. Oh! so long as we are where promises swarm, where mercy is proclaimed, where grace reigns, and where Jerusalem sinners are privileged with the first offer of mercy, it is a base thing to despair.

Despair undervalues the promise, undervalues the invitation, undervalues the proffer of grace. Despair undervalues the ability of God the Father, and the redeeming blood of Christ his Son. Oh unreasonable despair!

Despair makes man God's judge; it is a controller of the promise, a contradicter of Christ in his large offers of mercy: and one that undertakes to make unbelief the great manager of our reason and judgment, in determining about what God can and will do for sinners.

Despair! It is the devil's fellow, the devil's master; yea, the chains with which he is captivated and held under darkness for ever: and to give way thereto in a land, in a state and time that flows with milk and honey, is an uncomely thing.

I would say to my soul, O my soul! this is not the place of despair; this is not the time to despair in: as

long as mine eyes can find a promise in the Bible, as long as there is the least mention of grace, as long as there is a moment left me of breath or life in this world ; so long will I wait or look for mercy, so long will I fight against unbelief and despair.

This is the way to honour God and Christ ; this is the way to set the crown on the promise ; this is the way to welcome the invitation and inviter ; and this is the way to thrust thyself under the shelter and protection of the word of grace. Never despair so long as our text is alive, for that doth sound it out,—that mercy by Christ is offered, in the first place, to the biggest sinner.

Despair is an unprofitable thing ; it will make a man weary of waiting upon God ; 2 Kings vi. 33 ; it will make a man forsake God, and seek his heaven in the good things of this world ; Gen. iv. 13–18. It will make a man his own tormentor, and flounce and fling like a wild bull in a net ; Isa. li. 20.

Despair ! it drives a man to the study of his own ruin, and brings him at last to be his own executioner ; 2 Sam. xvii. 23 ; Matt. xxvii. 3–5.

Besides, I am persuaded also, that despair is the cause that there are so many that would fain be Atheists in the world : For because they have entertained a conceit that God will never be merciful to them ; therefore they labour to persuade themselves that there is no God at all, as if their misbelief would kill God, or cause him to cease to be. A poor shift for an immortal soul, for a soul who liketh not to retain God in its knowledge ! If this be the best that despair can do, let it go, man, and betake thyself to faith, to prayer, to wait for God, and to hope, in despite of ten thousand doubts. And for thy encouragement, take yet (as an addition to what has already been said) the following scripture ; “ The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy ; ” Psal. cxlviii. 11.

Whence note, They fear not God, that hope not in his mercy : also God is angry with them that hope not in his

mercy: for he only taketh pleasure in them that hope. He that believeth, or hath received his testimony, "hath set to his seal that God is true," John iii. 33; but he that receiveth it not hath made him a liar, and that is a very unworthy thing; 1 John v. 10, 11. "Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him; and to our God, for he will abundantly multiply pardons." Perhaps thou art weary of thy ways, but art not weary of thy thoughts, of thy unbelieving and despairing thoughts; now, God also would have thee cast away these thoughts, as such which he deserveth not at thy hands; for he will have mercy upon thee, and he will abundantly pardon.

"O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!" Luke xxiv. 25. Mark you here, slowness to believe is a piece of folly. Ay! but sayst thou, I do believe some, and I believe what can make against me. Ay, but sinner, Christ Jesus here calls thee fool for not believing all. Believe all, and despair if thou canst. He that believes all, believes that text that saith, Christ would have mercy preached first to the Jerusalem sinners. He that believeth all, believeth all the promises and consolations of the word; and the promises and consolations of the word weigh heavier than do all the curses and threatenings of the law; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment. Wherefore believe all, and mercy will to thy conscience weigh judgment down, and so minister comfort to thy soul. The Lord take the yoke from off thy jaws, since he has set meat before thee; Hos. xi. 4; and help thee to remember that he is pleased in the first place to offer mercy to the biggest sinners.

Sixthly, Since Jesus Christ would have mercy offered in the first place to the biggest sinners, let souls see that they lay right hold thereof, lest they, notwithstanding, indeed come short thereof. Faith only knows how to deal with mercy; wherefore put not in the place thereof presumption. I have observed, that as there are herbs and flowers in our gardens, so there are their counterfeits in the field; only

they are distinguished from the other by the name of wild ones. Why, there is faith, and wild faith ; and wild faith is this presumption. I call it wild faith, because God never placed it in his garden, his church ; it is only to be found in the field, the world. I also call it wild faith, because it only grows up and is nourished where other wild notions abound. Wherefore take heed of this, and all may be well ; for this presumptuousness is a very heinous thing in the eyes of God : "The soul," saith he, "that doeth ought presumptuously (whether he be born in the land, or a stranger), the same reproacheth the Lord ; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people ;" Numb. xv. 30.

The thoughts of this made David tremble, and pray that God would hold him back from presumptuous sins, and not suffer them to have dominion over him ; Psal. xix. 13.

Now this presumption, then, puts itself in the place of faith, when it tampereth with the promise for life, while the soul is a stranger to repentance. Wherefore you have in the text, to prevent doing thus, both repentance and remission of sins to be offered to Jerusalem ; not remission without repentance : for all that repent not shall perish, let them presume on grace and the promise while they will ; Luke xiii. 1-3.

Presumption, then, is that which severeth faith and repentance, concluding, that the soul shall be saved by grace, though the man was never made sorry for his sins, nor the love of the heart turned therefrom. This is to be self-willed, as Peter has it ; and this is a despising the word of the Lord, for that has put repentance and faith together ; Mark i. 15. And "because he hath despised the word of the Lord, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off : his iniquity shall be upon him." Numb. xv. 31.

Let such therefore look to it, who yet are, and abide in their sins ; for such, if they hope, as they are, to be saved, presume upon the grace of God. Wherefore presumption and not hearkening to God's word are put together ; Deut. xvii. 12.

Again, Then men presume when they are resolved to abide in their sins, and yet expect to be saved by God's grace through Christ. This is as much as to say, God liketh sin as well as I do, and careth not how men live, if so be they lean upon his Son. Of this sort are they that build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity ; that judge for reward, and teach for hire, and divine for money, and lean upon the Lord ; Mic. iii. 10, 11. This is doing things with an high hand against the Lord our God, and a taking him, as it were, at the catch. This is, as we say among men, to seek to put a trick upon God, as if he had not sufficiently fortified his proposals of grace by his holy word, against all such kind of fools as these. But look to it.

Such will be found at the day of God, not among that great company of Jerusalem sinners that shall be saved by grace, but among those that have been the great abusers of the grace of God in the world. Those that say, Let us sin that grace may abound, and let us do evil that good may come, their damnation is just. And if so, they are a great way off of that salvation that is by Jesus Christ presented to the Jerusalem sinners.

I have therefore these things to propound to that Jerusalem sinner that would know, if he may be so bold as to venture himself upon this grace.

First, Dost thou see thy sins ?

Secondly, Art thou weary of them ?

Thirdly, Wouldst thou with all thy heart be saved by Jesus Christ ? I dare say no less, I dare say no more. But if it be truly thus with thee, how great soever thy sins have been, how bad soever thou feelest thy heart, how far soever thou art from thinking that God has mercy for thee : thou art the man, the Jerusalem sinner, that the Word of God has conquered, and to whom it offereth free remission of sins, by the redemption that is in Jesus Christ.

When the jailor cried out, "Sirs, What must I do to be saved ?" The answer was, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." He that sees his sins aright, is brought to his wit's end by them ; and he that is

so, is willing to part from them, and to be saved by the grace of God.

If this be thy case, fear not, give no way to despair ; thou presumest not, if thou believest to life everlasting in Jesus Christ : yea, Christ is prepared for such as thou art.

Therefore take good courage and believe. The design of Satan is to tell the presumptuous, that their presuming on mercy is good ; but to persuade the believer, that his believing is impudent bold dealing with God. I never heard a presumptuous man in my life say that he was afraid that he presumed ; but I have heard many an honest humble soul say, that they have been afraid that their faith has been presumption. Why should Satan molest those whose ways he knows will bring them to him ? And who can think that he should be quiet when men take the right course to escape his hellish snares ? This, therefore, is the reason why the truly humbled is opposed, while the presumptuous goes on by wind and tide. The truly humble Satan hates, but he laughs to see the foolery of the other.

Does thy hand and heart tremble ? Upon thee the promise smiles. " To this man will I look," says God, " even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at my word ;" Isa. lxvi. 2.

What, therefore, I have said of presumption concerns not the humble in spirit at all. I therefore am for gathering up the stones, and for taking the stumblingblocks out of the way of God's people : and forewarning of them that lay the stumblingblock of their iniquity before their faces, and that are for presuming upon God's mercy ; and let them look to themselves ; Ezek. xiv. 6-8.

Also our text stands firm as ever it did, and our observation is still of force, that Jesus Christ would have mercy offered in the first place to the biggest sinners. So then, let none despair, let none presume ; let none despair that are sorry for their sins, and would be saved by Jesus Christ ; let none presume that abide in the liking of their sins, though they seem to know the exceeding grace of Christ ; for though the door stands wide open for the reception of the penitent,

yet it is fast enough barred and bolted against the presumptuous sinner. Be not deceived, God is not mocked, whatsoever a man sows, that he shall reap. It cannot be that God should be wheedled out of his mercy, or prevailed upon by lips of dissimulation; he knows them that trust in him, and that sincerely come to him by Christ for mercy; Nahum i. 7.

It is then not the abundance of sins committed, but the not coming heartily to God by Christ for mercy, that shuts men out of doors. And though their not coming heartily may be said to be but a sin, yet it is such a sin as causeth that all thy other sins abide upon thee unforgiven.

God complains of this. "They have not cried unto me with their heart; they turned, but not to the most High. They turned feignedly;" Jer. iii. 10; Hos. vii. 14, 16.

Thus doing, his soul hates; but the penitent, humble, brokenhearted sinner, be his transgressions red as scarlet, red like crimson, in number as the sand; though his transgressions cry to heaven against him for vengeance, and seem there to cry louder than do his prayers, or tears, or groans for mercy, yet he is safe. To this man God will look; Isa. i. 18; chap lxvi. 2.

Seventhly, Would Jesus Christ have mercy offered in the first place to the biggest sinners? Then here is ground for those that, as to practice, have not been such, to come to him for mercy.

Although there is no sin little of itself, because it is a contradiction of the nature and majesty of God; yet we must admit of divers numbers, and also of aggravations. Two sins are not so many as three; nor are three that are done in ignorance so big as one that is done against light, against knowledge and conscience. Also there is the child in sin, and a man in sin that has his hairs gray, and his skin wrinkled for very age. And we must put a difference betwixt these sinners also. For can it be that a child of seven, or ten, or sixteen years old, should be such a sinner—a sinner so vile in the eye of the law as he is who has

walked according to the course of this world, forty, fifty, sixty, or seventy years? Now the youth, this stripling, though he is a sinner, is but a little sinner, when compared with such.

Now, I say, if there be room for the first sort, for those of the biggest size, certainly there is room for the lesser size? If there be a door wide enough for a giant to go in at, there is certainly room for a dwarf. If Christ Jesus has grace enough to save great sinners, he has surely grace enough to save little ones. If he can forgive five hundred pence, for certain he can forgive fifty; Luke vii. 41, 42.

But you said before, that the little sinners must stand by until the great ones have received their grace, and that is discouraging!

I answer, there are two sorts of little sinners, such as are so, and such as feign themselves so. They are those that feign themselves so, that I intended there, and not those that are indeed comparatively so. Such as feign themselves so may wait long enough before they obtain forgiveness.

But again, a sinner may be comparatively a little sinner, and sensibly a great one. There are then two sorts of greatness in sin; greatness by reason of number; greatness by reason of thoroughness of conviction of the horrible nature of sin. In this last sense, he that has but one sin, if such a one could be found, may in his own eyes find himself the biggest sinner in the world. Let this man or this child therefore put himself among the great sinners, and plead with God as great sinners do, and expect to be saved with the great sinners, and as soon and as heartily as they.

Yea, a little sinner, that comparatively is truly so, if he shall graciously give way to conviction, and shall in God's light diligently weigh the horrible nature of his own sins, may yet sooner obtain forgiveness for them at the hands of the heavenly Father, than he that has ten times his sins, and so cause to cry ten times harder to God for mercy.

For the grievousness of the cry is a great thing with God ; for if he will hear the widow, if she cries at all, how much more if she cries most grievously ? Exod. xxii. 22, 23.

It is not the number, but the true sense of the abominable nature of sin, that makes the cry for pardon lamentable. He, as I said, that has many sins, may not cry so loud in the ears of God as he that has far fewer ; he, in our present sense, that is in his own eyes the biggest sinner, is he that soonest findeth mercy.

The offer then is to the biggest sinner ; to the biggest sinner first, and the mercy is first obtained by him that first confesseth himself to be such an one.

There are men that strive at the throne of grace for mercy, by pleading the greatness of their necessity. Now their plea, as to the prevalency of it, lieth not in the counting up of the number, but in the sense of the greatness of their sins, and in the vehemency of their cry for pardon. And it is observable, that though the birthright was Ruben's, and, for his foolishness, given to the sons of Joseph, yet Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the Messias ; 1 Chron. v. 1, 2.

There is a heavenly subtilty to be managed in this matter. "Thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing." The blessing belonged to Esau, but Jacob by his diligence made it his own ; Gen. xxvii. 33. The offer is to the biggest sinner, to the biggest sinner first ; but if he forbear to cry, the sinner that is a sinner less by far than he, both as to number and the nature of transgression, may get the blessing first, if he shall have grace to bestir himself well ; for the loudest cry is heard furthest, and the most lamentable pierces soonest.

I therefore urge this head, not because I would have little sinners go and tell God that they are little sinners, thereby to think to obtain mercy ; for, verily, so they are never like to have it : for such words declare, that such a one hath no true sense at all of the nature of his sins.

Sin, as I said, in the nature of it, is horrible, though it be but one single sin as to act ; yea, though it be but a sin-

ful thought ; and so worthily calls for the damnation of the soul.

The comparison, then, of little and great sinners, is to go for good sense among men. But to plead the fewness of thy sins, or the comparative harmlessness of their quantity before God, argueth no sound knowledge of the nature of thy sin, and so no true sense of the nature or need of mercy.

Little sinner, when therefore thou goest to God, though thou knowest in thy conscience that thou, as to acts, art no thief, no murderer, no whore, no liar, no false swearer, or the like, and in reason must needs understand that thus thou art not so profanely vile as others ; yet when thou goest to God for mercy, know no man's sins but thine own, make mention of no man's sins but thine own. Also labour not to lessen thy own, but magnify and greaten them by all just circumstances, and be as if there was never a sinner in the world but thyself. Also cry out, as if thou wast the only undone man ; and that is the way to obtain God's mercy.

It is one of the comeliest sights in the world to see a little sinner commenting upon the greatness of his sins, multiplying and multiplying them to himself, till he makes them in his own eyes bigger and higher than he seeth any other man's sins to be in the world ; and as base a thing it is to see a man do otherwise, and as basely will come on it ; Luke xviii. 10-14.

As, therefore, I said to the great sinner before, let him take heed lest he presume ; I say now to the little sinner, let him take heed that he do not dissemble : for there is as great an aptness in the little sinner to dissemble, as there is in the great one. " He that hideth his sins shall not prosper," be he a sinner little or great ; Prov. xxviii. 13.

Eighthly, Would Jesus Christ have mercy offered, in the first place, to the biggest sinners ? Then this shews the true cause why Satan makes such head as he doth against him.

The Father and the Holy Spirit are well spoken of by all deluders and deceived persons ; Christ only is the rock

of offence. "Behold I lay in Zion a stumbling-stone and a rock of offence;" Rom. ix. 33. Not that Satan careth for the Father or the Spirit more than he careth for the Son, but he can let men alone with their notions of the Father and the Spirit, for he knows they shall never enjoy the Father nor the Spirit, if indeed they receive not the merits of the Son. "He that hath the Son, hath life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not life," however they may boast themselves of the Father and the Spirit; 1 John v. 12. Again, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, hath both the Father and the Son;" 2 John i. 9.

Christ, and Christ only, is he that can make us capable to enjoy God with life and joy to all eternity. Hence he calls himself the way to the Father, the true and living way; John xiv. 6; Heb. x. 19, 20; for we cannot come to the Father but by him. Satan knows this, therefore he hates him. Deluded persons are ignorant of this, and, therefore, they are so led up and down by Satan by the nose as they are.

There are many things by which Satan has taken occasion to greaten his rage against Jesus Christ.

As, first, his love to man, and then the many expressions of that love. He hath taken man's nature upon him; he hath in that nature fulfilled the law to bring in righteousness for man; and hath spilt his blood for the reconciling of men to God; he hath broke the neck of death, put away sin, destroyed the works of the devil, and got into his own hands the keys of death: and all these are heinous things to Satan. He cannot abide Christ for this. Besides, he hath eternal life in himself, and that to bestow upon us; and we in all likelihood are to possess the very places from which the Satans by transgression fell, if not places more glorious. Wherefore he must needs be angry. And is it not a vexatious thing to him, that we should be admitted to the throne of grace by Christ, while he stands bound over in chains of darkness, to answer for his rebellions

against God and his Son, at the terrible day of judgment. Yea, we poor dust and ashes must become his judges, and triumph over him for ever : and all this long of Jesus Christ ; for he is the meritorious cause of all this.

Now though Satan seeks to be revenged for this, yet he knows it is in vain to attack the person of Christ ; he has overcome him : therefore he tampers with a company of silly men, that he may vilify him by them. And they, bold fools as they are, will not spare to spit in his face. They will rail at his person, and deny the very being of it ; they will rail at his blood, and deny the merit and worth of it. They will deny the very end why he accomplished the law, and by jiggs, and tricks, and quirks, which he helpeth them to, they set up fond names and images in his place, and give the glory of a Saviour to them. Thus Satan worketh under the name of Christ ; and his ministers under the name of the ministers of righteousness.

And by his wiles and stratagems he undoes a world of men ; but there is a seed, and they shall serve him, and it shall be counted to the Lord for a generation. These shall see their sins, and that Christ is the way to happiness. These shall venture themselves, both body and soul, upon his worthiness.

All this Satan knows, and therefore his rage is kindled the more. Wherefore, according to his ability and allowance, he assaulteth, tempteth, abuseth, and stirs up what he can to be hurtful to these poor people, that he may, while his time shall last, make it as hard and difficult for them to go to eternal glory as he can. Oftentimes he abuses them with wrong apprehensions of God, and with wrong apprehensions of Christ. He also casts them into the mire, to the reproach of religion, the shame of their brethren, the derision of the world, and dishonour of God. He holds our hands while the world buffets us ; he puts bearskins upon us, and then sets the dogs at us. He bedaubeth us with his own foam, and then tempts us to believe that that bedaubing comes from ourselves.

Oh ! the rage and the roaring of this lion, and the hatred that he manifests against the Lord Jesus, and against them that are purchased with his blood ! But yet, in the midst of all this, the Lord Jesus sends forth his herald to proclaim in the nations his love to the world, and to invite them to come in to him for life. Yea, his invitation is so large, that it offereth his mercy in the first place to the biggest sinners of every age, which augments the devil's rage the more.

Wherefore, as I said before, fret he, fume he, the Lord Jesus will divide the spoil with this great one ; yea, he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he hath poured out his soul unto death, and he was numbered with the transgressors, and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors ; Isa. liii. 12.

Ninthly, Would Jesus Christ have mercy offered in the first place to the biggest sinners ? Let the tempted harp upon this string for their help and consolation. The tempted wherever he dwells, always thinks himself the biggest sinner, one most unworthy of eternal life.

This is Satan's master-argument : thou art a horrible sinner, a hypocrite, one that has a profane heart, and one that is an utter stranger to a work of grace. I say this is his maul, his club, his master-piece ; he doth with this as some do with their most enchanting songs, sings them everywhere. I believe there are but few saints in the world that have not had this temptation sounding in their ears. But were they but aware, Satan by all this does but drive them to the gap out at which they should go, and so escape his roaring.

Saith he, thou art a great sinner, a horrible sinner, a profane hearted wretch, one that cannot be matched for a vile one in the country.

And all this while Christ says to his ministers, offer mercy, in the first place, to the biggest sinners. So that this temptation drives thee directly into the arms of Jesus Christ.

Were therefore the tempted but aware, he might say, Ay,

Satan, so I am, I am a sinner of the biggest size, and therefore have most need of Jesus Christ ; yea, because I am such a wretch, therefore Jesus Christ calls me ; yea, he calls me first : the first proffer of the Gospel is to be made to the Jerusalem sinner : I am he, wherefore stand back Satan ; make a lane, my right is first to come to Jesus Christ.

This now will be like for like. This would foil the devil : this would make him say, I must not deal with this man thus ; for then I put a sword into his hand to cut off my head.

And this is the meaning of Peter, when he saith, " Resist him stedfast in the faith ;" 1 Pet. v. 9. And of Paul, when he saith, " Take the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked ;" Eph. vi. 16.

Wherefore is it said, " Begin at Jerusalem," if the Jerusalem sinner is not to have the benefit of it ? And if I am to have the benefit of it, let me call it to mind when Satan haunts me with the continual remembrance of my sins, of my Jerusalem sins. Satan and my conscience say I am the biggest sinner,—Christ offereth mercy, in the first place, to the biggest sinners. Nor is the manner of the offer other but such as suiteth with my mind. I am sorry for my sin ; yea, sorry at my heart that ever sinful thought did enter, or find the least entertainment in my wicked mind ; and might I obtain my wish, I would never more that my heart should be a place for ought but the grace, and spirit, and faith of the Lord Jesus.

I speak not this to lessen my wickedness ; I would not for all the world but be placed by mine own conscience in the very front of the biggest sinners, that I might be one of the first that are beckoned by the gracious hand of Jesus the Saviour, to come to him for mercy.

Well, sinner, thou now speakest like a Christian, but say thus in a strong spirit in the hour of temptation, and then thou wilt, to thy commendation and comfort, quit thyself well.

This improving of Christ in dark hours, is the life, though the hardest part of our Christianity. We should neither stop at darkness, nor at the raging of our lusts, but go on in a way of venturing and casting the whole of our affairs for the next world at the foot of Jesus Christ. This is the way to make the darkness light, and also to allay the raging of our corruption.

The first time the Passover was eaten, was in the night ; and when Israel took courage to go forward, though the sea stood in their way like a devouring gulf, and the host of the Egyptians follow them at the heels ; yet the sea gives place, and their enemies were as still as a stone till they were gone over ; Exod. xii. 8 ; chap. xiv. 13, 14, 21, 22 ; chap. xv. 16.

There is nothing like faith to help at a pinch ; faith dissolves doubts as the sun drives away the mists. And that you may not be put out, know your time, as I said, of believing it always. There are times when some graces may be out of use, but there is no time wherein faith can be said to be so. Wherefore faith must be always in exercise.

Faith is the eye, is the mouth, is the hand, and one of these is of use all day long. Faith is to see, to receive, to work, or to eat ; and a Christian should be seeing or receiving, or working, or feeding all day long. Let it rain, let it blow, let it thunder, let it lighten, a Christian must still believe : " At what time," said the good man, " I am afraid, I will trust in thee ;" Psal. lvi. 2, 3.

Nor can we have a better encouragement to do this, than is by the text set before us, even an open heart for a Jerusalem sinner. And if for a Jerusalem sinner to come, then for such an one when come. If for such a one to be saved, then for such a one that is saved. If for such a one to be pardoned his great transgressions, then for such a one who is pardoned these, to come daily to Jesus Christ, too, to be cleansed and set free from his common infirmities, and from the iniquities of his holy things.

Therefore let the poor sinner that would be saved labour

for skill to make the best improvement of the grace of Christ to help him against the temptations of the devil and his sins.

Tenthly, Would Jesus Christ have mercy offered in the first place to the biggest sinners? Let those men consider this, that (have, or) may in a day of trial have spoken or done what their profession or conscience told them they should not, and that have the guilt and burden thereof upon their consciences.

Whether a thing be wrong or right, guilt may pursue him that doth contrary to his conscience. But suppose a man should deny his God, or his Christ, or relinquish a good profession, and be under the real guilt thereof, shall he therefore conclude he is gone for ever? Let him come again with Peter's tears, and no doubt he shall obtain Peter's forgiveness. For the text includes the biggest sinners.

And it is observable, that before this clause was put into this commission, Peter was pardoned his horrible revolt from his Master. He that revolteth in the day of trial, if he is not shot quite dead upon the place, but is sensible of his wound, and calls out for a surgeon, shall find his Lord at hand to pour wine and oil into his wounds, that he may again be healed, and to encourage him to think that there may be mercy for him: besides what we find recorded of Peter, you read in the Acts, some were, through the violence of their trials, compelled to blaspheme, and yet are called saints; Acts xxvi. 9-11.

Hence you have a promise or two that speak concerning such kind of men, to encourage us to think that at least some of them shall come back to the Lord their God. "Shall they fall," saith he, "and not arise? Shall they turn away, and not return?" Jer. viii. 4. "And in that day I will assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that was driven out, and her that I have afflicted. And I will make her that halteth a remnant, and her that was cast off a strong nation; and the Lord shall reign over them in Mount Zion for ever." What we are to understand by

her that halteth, is best expressed by the Prophet Elijah ; Mic. iv. 6, 7 ; Zeph. iii. 19 ; 1 Kings xviii. 21.

I will conclude, then, that for them that have halted, or may halt, the Lord has mercy in the bank, and is willing to accept them if they return to him again.

Perhaps they may never be after that of any great esteem in the house of God, but if the Lord will admit them to favour and forgiveness : O exceeding and undeserved mercy ! See Ezekiel xlv. 10-14.

Thou, then, that mayst be the man, remember this, that there is mercy also for thee. Return therefore to God, and to his Son, who hath yet in store for thee, and who will do thee good.

But perhaps thou wilt say, he doth not save all revolters, and, therefore, perhaps not me.

Answer. Art thou returning to God ? If thou art returning, thou art the man ; "Return ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings ;" Jer. iii. 22.

Some, as I said, that revolt, are shot dead upon the place, and for them, who can help them ? But for them that cry out of their wounds, it is a sign they are yet alive, and if they use the means in time, doubtless they may be healed.

Christ Jesus has bags of mercy that were never yet broken up or unsealed. Hence it is said, he has goodness laid up ; things reserved in heaven for his. And if he breaks up one of these bags, who can tell what he can do !

Hence his love is said to be such as passeth knowledge, and that his riches are unsearchable. He has, no body knows what ; for no body knows whom : he has by him in store for such as seem in the view of all men to be gone beyond recovery. For this the text is plain. What man or angel could have thought that the Jerusalem sinners had been yet on this side of an impossibility of enjoying life and mercy ? Hadst thou seen their actions, and what horrible things they did to the Son of God ; yea, how stoutly they backed what they did with resolves and endeavours to persevere, when they had killed his person, against his name and doctrine ; and that there was not found among

them all that while, as we read of, the least remorse or regret for these their doings; couldst thou have imagined that mercy would ever have took hold of them, at least so soon! Nay, that they should, of all the world, be counted those only meet to have it offered to them in the very first place! For so my text commands, saying, "Preach repentance and remission of sins among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

I tell you the thing is a wonder, and must for ever stand for a wonder among the sons of men. It stands also for an everlasting invitation and allurements to the biggest sinners to come to Christ for mercy.

Now since, in the opinion of all men, the revolter is such a one; if he has, as I said before, any life in him, let him take encouragement to come again, that he may live by Christ.

Eleventhly, Would Jesus Christ have mercy offered in the first place to the biggest sinners? Then let God's ministers tell them so. There is an incidence in us, I know not how it doth come about, when we are converted, to condemn them that are left behind. Poor fools as we are, we forget that we ourselves were so; Tit. iii. 2, 3.

But would it not become us better, since we have tasted that the Lord is gracious, to carry it towards them so, that we may give them convincing ground to believe, that we have found that mercy which also sets open the door for them to come and partake with us.

Ministers, I say, should do thus, both by their doctrine, and in all other respects.

Austerity doth not become us, neither in doctrine nor in conversation. We ourselves live by grace; let us give as we receive, and labour to persuade our fellow-sinners which God has left behind us, to follow after, that they may partake with us of grace. We are saved by grace, let us live like them that are gracious. Let all our things (to the world) be done in charity towards them; pity them, pray for them, be familiar with them for their good. Let us lay aside our foolish, worldly, carnal grandeur; let us not walk

the streets, and have such behaviours as signify we are scarce for touching of the poor ones that are left behind, no not with a pair of tongs. It becomes us not thus to do.

Remember your Lord, he was familiar with publicans and sinners to a proverb ; " Behold a gluttonous man, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners ;" Matt. xi. 19. The first part, concerning his gluttonous eating and drinking, to be sure, was an horrible slander ; but for the other, nothing was ever spoke truer of him by the world. Now, why should we lay hands cross on this text : that is, choose good victuals, and love the sweet wine better than the salvation of the poor publican ? Why not familiar with sinners, provided we hate their spots and blemishes, and seek that they may be healed of them ?

Why not fellowly with our carnal neighbours ? If we do take occasion to do so, that we may drop, and be yet distilling some good doctrine upon their souls ? Why not go to the poor man's house, and give him a penny, and a Scripture to think upon ? Why not send for the poor to fetch away at least the fragments of thy table, that the bowels of thy fellow-sinner may be refreshed as well as thine ?

Ministers should be exemplary ; but I am an inferior man, and must take heed of too much meddling. But might I, I would meddle with them, with their wives, and with their children too. I mean not this of all, but of them that deserve it, though I may not name them.

But, I say, let ministers follow the steps of their blessed Lord, who by word and deed shewed his love to the salvation of the world, in such a carriage as declared him to prefer their salvation before his own private concern. For we are commanded to follow his steps, " who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth."

And as I have said concerning ministers, so I say to all the brethren, carry it so, that all the world may see, that indeed you are the sons of love.

Love your Saviour ; yea, shew one to another that you love him, not only by a seeming love of affection, but with

the love of duty. Practical love is best. Many love Christ with nothing but the lick of the tongue. Alas ! Christ Jesus the Lord must not be put off thus : " He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them," saith he, " he it is that loveth me ;" John xiv. 21.

Practical love, which stands in self-denial, in charity to my neighbour, and a patient enduring of affliction for his name ; this is counted love.

Right love to Christ is that which carries in it a provoking argument to others of the brethren ;" Heb. x. 24.

Should a man ask me how he should know that he loveth the children of God ? The best answer I could give him, would be in the words of the Apostle John ; " By this," saith he, " we know we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments ;" 1 John, v. 2.

Love to God and Christ is then shewn when we are tender of his name ; and then we shew ourselves tender of his name when we are afraid to break any the least of his commandments. And when we are here, then do we shew our love to our brother also.

Now, we have obligation sufficient thus to do, for that our Lord loved us, and gave himself for us, to deliver us from death, that we might live through him.

The world, when they hear the doctrine that I have asserted and handled in this little book ; to wit, that Jesus Christ would have mercy offered in the first place to the biggest sinners, will be apt, because themselves are unbelievers, to think that this is a doctrine that leads to looseness, and that gives liberty to the flesh ; but if you that believe love your brethren and your neighbours truly, and as you should, you will put to silence the ignorance of such foolish men, and stop their mouths from speaking evil of you.

And, I say, let the love of Christ constrain us to this. Who deserveth our heart, our mouth, our life, our goods, so much as Jesus Christ, who has bought us to himself by his blood, to this very end, that we should be a peculiar people, zealous of good works ?

There is nothing more seemly in the world, than to see a Christian walk as becomes the Gospel ; nor any thing more unbecoming a reasonable creature, than to hear a man say, I believe in Christ, and yet see in his life debauchery and profaneness. Might I, such men should be counted the basest of men ; such men should be counted by all unworthy of the name of a Christian, and should be shunned by every good man, as such who are the very plague of profession.

For so it is written, we should carry it towards them. Whoso have a form of godliness, and deny the power thereof, from such we must turn away.

It has oftentimes come into my mind to ask, by what means it is that the gospel profession should be so tainted with loose and carnal gospellers ? and I could never arrive to better satisfaction in the matter than this,—such men are made professors by the devil, and so by him put among the rest of the godly. A certain man had a fruitless fig-tree planted in his vineyard ; but by whom was it planted there ? Even by him that sowed the tares, his own children, among the wheat ; Luke xiii. 6 ; Matth. xiii. 37–40. And that was the devil. But why doth the devil do thus ? Not of love to them, but to make of them offences and stumblingblocks to others. For he knows that a loose professor in the church does more mischief to religion than ten can do to it that are in the world.

Was it not, think you, the devil that stirred up the damsel that you read of in Acts xvi., to cry out, “ These are the servants of the most high God, that shew unto us the way of salvation ! ” Yes it was, as is evident, for Paul was grieved to hear it. But why did the devil stir up her to cry so ? but because that was the way to blemish the Gospel, and to make the world think that it came from the same hand as did her soothsaying and witchery ; verse 16–18 ; “ Holiness, O Lord, becomes thy house for ever.”

Let, therefore, whoever they be that profess the name of Christ, take heed that they scandal not that profession which they make of him, since he has so graciously offered us, as

we are sinners of the biggest size, in the first place, his grace to save us.

Having thus far spoken of the riches of the grace of Christ, and of the freeness of his heart to embrace the Jerusalem sinners, it may not be amiss to give you yet, as a caution, an intimation of one thing, namely, that this grace and freeness of his heart is limited to time and day ; the which, whoso overstandeth, shall perish notwithstanding.

For as a king, who, of grace, sendeth out to his rebellious people an offer of pardon, if they accept thereof by such a day, yet beheadeth or hangeth those that come not in for mercy until the day or time be past ; so Christ Jesus has set the sinner a day, a day of salvation, an acceptable time ; but he who standeth out, or goeth on in rebellion beyond that time, is like to come off with the loss of his soul ; 2 Cor. vi. 2 ; Heb. iii. 13, 16, 17, 18, 19 ; chap. iv. 7 ; Luke xix. 41, 42.

Since, therefore, things are thus, it may be convenient here to touch a little upon these particulars.

First, That this day, or time thus limited, when it is considered with reference to this or that man, is oftentimes undiscerned by the person concerned therein, and always is kept secret as to the shutting up thereof.

And this, in the wisdom of God, is thus to the end ; no man, when called upon, should put off turning to God to another time. Now, and to-day, is that and only that which is revealed in holy writ ; Psal. l. 22 ; Eccles. xii. 1 ; Heb. iii. 13, 16.

And this shews us the desperate hazards which those men run, who when invitation or conviction attends them, put off turning to God to be saved till another, and, as they think, a more fit season and time. For many, by so doing, defer this to do till the day of God's patience and long-suffering is ended ; and then, for their prayers and cries after mercy, they receive nothing but mocks, and are laughed at by the God of heaven ; Prov. i. 20-30 ; Isaiah lxv. 12-16 ; chap. lxvi. 4 ; Zech. vii. 11-13.

Secondly, Another thing to be considered is this, viz.

that the day of God's grace with some men begins sooner, and also sooner ends than it doth with others. Those at the first hour of the day, had their call sooner than they who were called upon to turn to God at the sixth hour of the day ; yea, and they who were hired at the third hour, had their call sooner than they who were called at the eleventh ; Matt. xx. 1-6.

1. The day of God's patience began with Ishmael, and also ended before he was twenty years old. At thirteen years of age he was circumcised ; the next year after Isaac was born ; and then Ishmael was fourteen years old. Now that day that Isaac was weaned, that day was Ishmael rejected ; and suppose that Isaac was three years old before he was weaned, that was but the seventeenth year of Ishmael ; wherefore the day of God's grace was ended with him betimes ; Gen. xvii. 24, 25 ; chap. xxi. 2-11 ; Gal. iv. 30.

2. Cain's day ended with him betimes ; for after God had rejected him, he lived to beget many children, and build a city, and to do many other things. But alas ! all that while he was a fugitive and a vagabond. Nor carried he any thing with him after the day of his rejection was come, but this doleful language in his conscience, " From God's face shall I be hid ;" Gen. iv. 10-15.

3. Esau, through his extravagancies would needs go to sell his birth-right, not fearing (as other confident fools) but that yet the blessing would still be his, after which he lived many years ; but all of them under the wrath of God, as was, when time came, made appear to his destruction ; for " When he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears ;" Heb. xii. 14-16.

Many instances might be given as to such tokens of the displeasure of God against such as fool away, as the wise man has it, the prize which is put into their hand ; Prov. xvii. 16.

Let these things, therefore, be a further caution to those

that sit under the glorious sound of the Gospel, and hear of the riches of the grace of God in Christ to poor sinners.

To slight grace, to despise mercy, and to stop the ear when God speaks, when he speaks such great things, so much to our profit, is a great provocation.

He offereth, he calls, he woos, he invites, he prays, he beseeches us in this day of his grace to be reconciled to him; yea, and has provided for us the means of reconciliation himself. Now, this despised must needs be provoking; and it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

But some man may say unto me, Fain I would be saved, fain I would be saved by Christ; but I fear this day of grace is past, and that I shall perish, notwithstanding the exceeding riches of the grace of God.

Answer. To this doubt I would answer several things.

First, With respect to this day.

Secondly, With respect to thy desires.

Thirdly, With respect to thy fears.

First, With respect to the day; that is, whether it be ended with a man or no.

1. Art thou jogged, and shaken, and molested at the hearing of the Word? Is thy conscience awakened and convinced then that thou art at present in a perishing state, and that thou hast need to cry to God for mercy? This is a hopeful sign that this day of grace is not past with thee. For usually they that are past grace, are also, in their conscience, past feeling, being "seared with an hot iron;" Eph. iv. 18, 19; 1 Tim. iv. 1, 2.

Consequently, those past grace must be such as are denied the awakening fruits of the Word preached. "The dead that hear," says Christ, "shall live;" at least while Christ has not quite done with them; the day of God's patience is not at an end with them; John v. 25.

2. Is there in thy more retired condition, arguings, strugglings, and strivings with thy spirit to persuade thee of the vanity of what vain things thou lovest, and to win

thee in thy soul to a choice of Christ Jesus and his heavenly things? Take heed and rebel not, for the day of God's grace and patience will not be past with thee till he saith his "Spirit shall strive no more" with thee; for then the woe comes, when "he shall depart from them;" and when he says to the means of grace, "Let them alone;" Hos. iv. 17; chap. ix. 12.

3. Art thou visited in the night-seasons with dreams about thy state, and that thou art in danger of being lost? Hast thou heart-shaken apprehensions when deep sleep is upon thee, of hell, death, and judgment to come? These are signs that God has not wholly left thee, or cast thee behind his back for ever. "For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not; in a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, that he may withdraw man from his purpose (his sinful purposes) and hide pride from man;" Job xxxiii. 14-17.

All this while God has not left the sinner, nor is come to the end of his patience towards him, but stands at least with the door of grace a-jar in his hand, as being loth as yet to bolt it against him.

4. Art thou followed with affliction, and dost thou hear God's angry voice in thy afflictions? Doth he send with thy affliction an interpreter to shew thee thy vileness; and why, or wherefore, the hand of God is upon thee, and upon what thou hast; to wit, that it is for thy sinning against him, and that thou mightest be turned to him? If so, thy summer is not quite ended; thy harvest is not quite over and gone. Take heed, stand out no longer, lest he cause darkness, and lest thy feet stumble upon the dark mountains; and lest, while you look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness; Jer. viii. 20; chap. xiii. 15-17.

5. Art thou crossed, disappointed, and way-laid, and overthrown in all thy foolish ways and doings? This is a sign God has not quite left thee, but that he still waits

upon thee to turn thee. Consider, I say, has he made a hedge and a wall to stop thee? Has he crossed thee in all thou puttest thy hand unto? Take it as a call to turn to him, for, by his thus doing, he shews he has a mind to give thee a better portion. For usually when God gives up men, and resolves to let them alone in the broad way, he gives them rope, and lets them have their desires in all hurtful things; Hos. ii. 6-15; Psalm lxxiii. 3-13; Rom. xi. 9.

Therefore take heed to this also, that thou strive not against this hand of God; but betake thyself to a serious inquiry into the causes of this hand of God upon thee, and incline to think, it is because the Lord would have thee look to that, which is better than what thou wouldst satisfy thyself withal. When God had a mind to make the prodigal go home to his father, he sent a famine upon him, and denied him a bellyful of the husks which the swine did eat. And observe it, now he was in a strait, he betook him to consideration of the good that there was in his father's house; yea, he resolved to go home to his father, and his father dealt well with him; he received him with music and dancing, because he had received him safe and sound; Luke xv. 14-32.

6. Hast thou any enticing thoughts of the word of God upon thy mind? Doth, as it were, some holy word of God give a glance upon thee, cast a smile upon thee, let fall, though it be but one drop of its savour upon thy spirit; yea, though it stays but one moment with thee? O then the day of grace is not past! The gate of heaven is not shut! nor God's heart and bowels withdrawn from thee as yet. Take heed, therefore, and beware that thou make much of the heavenly gift, and of that good word of God of the which he has made thee taste. Beware, I say, and take heed; there may be a falling away for all this; but, I say, as yet God has not left thee, as yet he has not cast thee off; Heb. vi. 1-9.

Secondly, With respect to thy desires, what are they? Wouldst thou be saved! Wouldst thou be saved with a

thorough salvation? Wouldst thou be saved from guilt and filth too? Wouldst thou be the servant of thy Saviour? Art thou indeed weary of the service of thy old master the devil, sin, and the world? And have these desires put thy soul to flight? Hast thou through desires betaken thyself to thy heels? Dost fly to him that is a Saviour from the wrath to come, for life? If these be thy desires, and if they be unfeigned, fear not. Thou art one of those runaways which God has commanded our Lord to receive, and not to send thee back to the devil thy master again, but to give thee a place in his house, even the place which liketh thee best. "Thou shalt not deliver to his master," says he, "the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee. He shall dwell with thee, even among you in that place which he shall choose, in one of thy gates where it liketh him best; thou shalt not oppress him;" Deut. xxiii. 15, 16.

This is a command to the church, consequently to the Head of the church; for all commands from God come to her through her Head. Whence I conclude, that as Israel of old was to receive the runaway servant who escaped from a heathen master to them, and should not dare to send him back to his master again, so Christ's church now, and consequently Christ himself, may not, will not, refuse that soul that has made his escape from sin, Satan, the world, and hell, unto him, but will certainly let him dwell in his house, among his saints, in that place which he shall choose, even where it liketh him best. For he says in another place, "And him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." In no wise, let his crimes be what they will, either for nature, multitude, or the attendance of aggravating circumstances.

Wherefore, if thy desires be firm, sound, and unfeigned to become the saved of Christ, and his servant, fear not, he will not, he will in no wise put thee away, or turn thee over to thy old master again.

Thirdly, As to thy fears, whatever they are, let that be

supposed which is supposed before, and they are groundless, and so of no weight.

Object. But I am afraid I am not elected, or chosen to salvation, though you called me fool a little before for so fearing.

Ans. Though election is, in order, before calling, as to God, yet the knowledge of calling must go before the belief of my election as to myself. Wherefore, souls that doubt of the truth of their effectual calling, do but plunge themselves into a deeper labyrinth of confusion that concern themselves with their election ; I mean, while they labour to know it before they prove their calling. " Make your calling, and so your election, sure ;" 2 Pet. i. 4-11.

Wherefore, at present, lay the thoughts of thy election by, and ask thyself these questions : Do I see my lost condition ? Do I see salvation is nowhere but in Christ ? Would I share in this salvation by faith in him ? And would I, as was said before, be thoroughly saved, to wit, from the filth as from the guilt ? Do I love Christ, his Father, his saints, his words, and ways ? This is the way to prove we are elect. Wherefore, sinner, when Satan, or thine own heart seeks to puzzle thee with election, say thou, I cannot attend to talk of this point now, but stay till I know that I am called of God to the fellowship of his Son, and then I will shew you that I am elect, and that my name is written in the book of life.

If poor distressed souls would observe this order, they might save themselves the trouble of an unprofitable labour under these unreasonable and soul-sinking doubts.

Let us therefore, upon the sight of our wretchedness, fly and venturously leap into the arms of Christ, which are now as open to receive us into his bosom, as they were when nailed to the cross. This is coming to Christ for life aright ; this is right running away from thy master to him, as was said before. And for this we have multitudes of scriptures to support, encourage, and comfort us in our so doing.

But now, let him that doth thus be sure to look for it, for Satan will be with him to-morrow, to see if he can get him again to his old service ; and if he cannot do that, then will he enter into dispute with him, to wit, about whether he be elect to life, and called indeed to partake of this Christ, to whom he is fled for succour, or whether he comes to him of his own presumptuous mind. Therefore we are bid, as to come, so to arm ourselves with that armour which God has provided ; that we may resist, quench, stand against, and withstand all the fiery darts of the devil ; Eph. vi. 11-18.

If, therefore, thou findest Satan in this order to march against thee, remember then thou hadst this item about it ; and betake thyself to faith and good courage ; and be sober, and hope to the end.

Object. But how if I should have sinned the sin unpardonable, or that called the sin against the Holy Ghost ?

Answer. If thou hast, thou art lost for ever ; but yet before it is concluded by thee that thou hast so sinned, know that they that would be saved by Jesus Christ through faith in his blood, cannot be counted for such.

1. Because of the promise, for that must not be frustrated : and that says, " And him that cometh to Christ, he will in no wise cast out." And again, " Whoso will, let him take of the water of life freely ;" John vi. 37 ; Rev. xxi. 6 ; chap. xxii. 17.

But I say, how can these scriptures be fulfilled, if he that would indeed be saved, as before, has sinned the sin unpardonable ? The scriptures must not be made void, nor their truth be cast to the ground. Here is a promise, and here is a sinner ; a promise that says he shall not be cast out that comes ; and the sinner comes, wherefore he must be received : consequently he that comes to Christ for life, has not, cannot have sinned that sin for which there is no forgiveness.

And this might suffice for an answer to any coming soul, that fears, though he comes, that he has sinned the sin against the Holy Ghost.

2. But again, he that has sinned the sin against the Holy Ghost cannot come, has no heart to come, can by no means be made willing to come to Jesus Christ for life ; for that he has received such an opinion of him, and of his things, as deters and holds him back.

1. He counteth this blessed person, the Son of God, a magician, a conjuror, a witch, or one that did, when he was in the world, what he did by the power and spirit of the devil ; Matt. ix. 34 ; chap. xii. 24, 25, &c. ; Mark iii. 22-30. Now he that has this opinion of this Jesus, cannot be willing to cast himself at his feet for life, or to come to him as the only way to God and to salvation. And hence it is said again, that such an one puts him to open shame, and treadeth him under foot, that is, by contemning, reproaching, vilifying, and despising of him, as if he were the vilest one, or the greatest cheat in the world : and has therefore, as to his esteem of him, called him accursed, crucified him to himself, or counted him one hanged, as one of the worst of malefactors ; Heb. vi. 6 ; chap. x. 29 ; 1 Cor. xii. 3.

2. His blood, which is the meritorious cause of man's redemption, even the blood of the everlasting covenant, he counteth an unholy thing, or that which has no more virtue in it to save a soul from sin than has the blood of a dog ; Heb. x. 29. For when the Apostle says, " he counts it an unholy thing," he means, he makes it of less value than that of a sheep or cow, which were clean according to the law ; and therefore must mean, that his blood was of no more worth to him in his account than was the blood of a dog, an ass, or a swine, which always was, as to sacrifices, rejected by the God of heaven, as unholy or unclean.

Now he who has no better esteem of Jesus Christ, and of his death and blood, will not be persuaded to come to him for life, or to trust in him for salvation.

3. But further, all this must be done against manifest tokens to prove the contrary, or after the shining of gospel light upon the soul, or some considerable profession of him as the Messiah, or that he was the Saviour of the world.

1. It must be done against manifest tokens to prove the contrary ; and thus the reprobate Jews committed it when they saw the works of God, which put forth themselves in him, and called them the works of the devil and Beelzebub.

2. It must be done against some shining light of the gospel upon them. And thus it was with Judas, and with those who, after they were enlightened, and had tasted, and had felt something of the powers of the world to come, fell away from the faith of him, and put him to open shame and disgrace ; Heb. vi. 5, 6.

3. It must also be done after, and in opposition to one's own open profession of him. " For if after they have escaped the pollution of the world, through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning ; for it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment (which is the word of faith) delivered unto them."

4. All this must be done openly, before witnesses, in the face, sight, and view of the world, by word and act. This is the sin that is unpardonable ; and he that hath thus done, can never, it is impossible he ever should be renewed again to repentance, and that for a double reason ; for such an one doth say, he will not ; and of him God says, he shall not have the benefit of salvation by him.

Object. But if this be the sin unpardonable, why is it called the sin against the Holy Ghost, and not rather the sin against the Son of God ?

Answ. It is called " the sin against the Holy Ghost," because such count the works he did, which were done by the Spirit of God, the works of the spirit of the devil. Also because all such as so reject Christ Jesus the Lord, they do it in despite of that testimony which the Holy Ghost has given of him in the holy scriptures ; for the scriptures are the breathings of the Holy Ghost, as in all other things, so in that testimony they bear of the person, of the works, sufferings, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ.

Sinner, this is the sin against the Holy Ghost. What sayst thou? Hast thou committed it? Nay, I know thou hast not, if thou wouldst be saved by Christ. Yea, it is impossible that thou shouldst have done it, if indeed thou wouldst be saved by him.

No man can desire to be saved by him, whom he yet judgeth to be an impostor, a magician, a witch. No man can hope for redemption by that blood which he yet counteth an unholy thing. Nor will God ever suffer such an one to repent, who has, after light and profession of him, thus horribly and devil-like contemned and trampled upon him.

True, words and wars and blasphemies against this Son of man are pardonable; but then they must be done ignorantly and in unbelief. Also all blasphemous thoughts are likewise such as may be passed by, if the soul afflicted with them indeed is sorry for them; 1 Tim. i. 13-15; Mar. iii. 28.

All but this, sinner, all but this! If God had said, he will forgive one sin, it had been undeserved grace; but when he says he will pardon all but one, this is grace to the height. Nor is that one unpardonable otherwise, but because the Saviour that should save them is rejected and put away.

We read of Jacob's ladder; Christ is Jacob's ladder that reacheth up to heaven, and he that refuseth to go by this ladder thither, will scarce by other means get up so high. There is none other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved. There is none other sacrifice for sin than this; he also, and he only, is the Mediator that reconcileth men to God. And, sinner, if thou wouldst be saved by him, his benefits are thine; yea, though thou art a great and Jerusalem transgressor.

THE

PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN.



THE

PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN.

Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a Publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself; God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this Publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the Publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.—Luke, xviii. 10-13.

IN the beginning of this chapter you read of the reason of the parable of the unjust judge and the poor widow; namely, to encourage men to pray. "He spake a parable to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;" and a most sweet parable for that purpose it is: for if through importunity, a poor widow woman may prevail with an unjust judge, and so consequently with an unmerciful and hard-hearted tyrant, how much more shall the poor, afflicted, distressed, and tempted people of God, prevail with, and obtain mercy at the hands of, a loving, just, and merciful God? The unjust judge would not hearken to, nor regard the cry of, the poor widow, for a while: "But afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me." "Hark," saith Christ, "what the unjust judge saith." "And shall

not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him ?—I tell you that he will avenge them speedily.”

This is therefore a very comfortable parable to such of the saints as are under hard usage by reason of evil men, their might and tyranny : for by it we are taught to believe and expect, that God, though for a while he seemeth not to regard, yet will, in due time and season, arise and set such in safety from them that puff at them ; Psalm xii. 4.

Let the good Christian pray always ; let him pray, and not faint at seeming delays ; for if the widow by importunity prevailed with the unjust judge, how much more shall he with his heavenly Father. “ I tell you,” says Christ, “ that he will avenge them speedily.”

But now, forasmuch as this parable reacheth not (so directly) the poor Publican in the text, therefore our Lord begins again, and adds to that other parable, this parable which I have chosen for my text ; by which he designeth two things : First, The conviction of the proud and self-conceited Pharisee : Secondly, The raising up and healing of the cast down and dejected Publican. And observe it, as by the first parable he chiefly designeth the relief of those that are under the hands of cruel tyrants, so by this he designeth the relief of those that lie under the load and burden of a guilty and disquieted conscience.

This therefore is a parable that is full of singular comfort to such of the sinners in the world that are clogged with guilt and sense of sin ; and that lie under the apprehensions of, and that are driven to God by the sense of the judgment that for sin is due unto them.

In my handling of this text, I shall have respect to these things—

1. To the persons in the text.
2. To the condition of the persons in the text.
3. To the conclusion that Christ makes upon them both.

First, For the persons. They were, as you see, far one from another in their own apprehension of themselves ; one good, the other bad ; but yet in the judgment of the

law, both alike, both the same, both sinners ; for they both stood in need of mercy. True, the first mentioned did not see it, as the other poor sinner did ; but that altereth not the case : he that is in the judgment of the law a sinner, is in the judgment of the law for sin condemned, though in his own judgment he be ever so righteous.

Men must not be judged, or justified, according to what themselves do think, but according to the verdict and sentence that cometh out of the mouth of God about them. Now, the sentence of God is, "All have sinned : " "There is none righteous, no, not one ; " Rom. iii. It is no matter, then, what the Pharisee did think of himself ; God by his word hath proclaimed him a sinner : a sinner, by reason of original sin ; a sinner, by reason of actual transgression. Personally, therefore, with reference to the true nature of their state, they both were sinners, and both by the law under condemnation. True, the Publican's leprosy was outward ; but the Pharisee's leprosy was inward : his heart, his soul, his spirit, was as foul, and had as much the plague of sin, as had the other in his life or conversation.

Secondly, As to their conditions (I do not mean by condition, so much a habit of mind, as the state that they had each of them put themselves into by that mind.) "The one," says the text, "was a Pharisee, the other a Publican." A Pharisee : that is, one that hath chosen to himself such a course of life. A Publican : that is, one that hath chosen to himself such a course of life. These terms, therefore, shew the divers courses of life that they had put themselves into. The Pharisee, as he thought, had put himself into a condition for heaven and glory ; but the Publican was for this world and his lusts. Wherefore when the Pharisee stands in the temple, he boasteth of himself and good condition, but condemneth the Publican, and bitterly inveigheth against him. But, as I said, their personal state, by the law, was not at all changed. The Pharisee made himself never the better ; the Publican also abode in his place.

Indeed the Publican is here found to recant, and repent of his condition, and of the condition that he had put him-

self into ; and the Pharisee to boast of his. But the Publican's repentance was not of himself, but of God, who can also, yea, and sometimes it is evident (Acts ix.) he doth, make Pharisees also repent of that condition that they have chosen to be in themselves ; Phil. iii. 3-8. The Pharisee, therefore, in commending of himself, makes himself never the better ; the Publican also, in condemning of himself, makes himself never the worse. Nay, contrariwise, the Pharisee, by commending of himself, makes himself much the worse, ver. 14 ; and the Publican, by condemning of himself, makes himself much the better. "I tell you (says Christ) this man went down to his house justified rather than the other ; for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased : and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

But, I say, as to men's commending of themselves, yea, though others should commend them also, that availeth, to God-ward, nothing at all. "For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth." So then, men in "measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise ;" 2 Cor. x. 12.

Now, this was the way of the Pharisee ; I am not, saith he, as other men : I am no extortioner, nor unjust, no adulterer, nor yet as this Publican.

"Two men went up into the temple to pray ;" and they two, as I said, as opposite one to the other, as any two men that ever went thither to pray. One of them was over righteous, and the other wicked over much. Some would have thought, had they not by the word of Christ been otherwise described, that they had been both of the same religion ; for they both went up into the temple to pray ; yea, both to pray, and that at the same time, as if they did it by appointment, by agreement ; but there was no such thing. The one was a Pharisee, the other a Publican : for so saith the after words : and therefore persons as opposite as light and darkness, as fire and water ; I mean, as to their apprehensions one of another. The Pharisee could not abide the Publican, nor could the Publican brook

the Pharisee ; and yet both went up into the temple to pray. It is strange to see, and yet it is seen, that men cross in their minds, cross in their principles, cross in their apprehensions ; yea, and cross in their prayers too, should yet meet together in the temple to pray.

“ Two men ;” men not of the middle sort, and them too picked out of the best and worst that was : two men, a Pharisee, and a Publican.

To be a Pharisee was in those days counted honourable for religion, and for holiness of life. A Pharisee was a man of esteem and repute among the Jews, though it is a term of reproach with us ; else Paul would not at such a time as he did it, have said, “ Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee ;” Acts xxiii, 6 ; Phil. iii. 5. For now he stood upon his purgation and justification, especially it appears so by the place first named. And far be it from any to think, that Paul would make use of a colour of wickedness, to save thereby himself from the fury of the people.

A Publican was in those days counted one of the vilest of men, as is manifest ; because when they are in the word, by way of discrimination, made mention of, they are ranked with the most vile and base ; therefore they are joined with sinners—“ He eateth with publicans and sinners,” and “ with harlots.” “ Publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Yea, when our Lord Christ would have the rebellious professor stigmatized to purpose, he saith, “ Let him be to thee as an heathen man and a publican.”

We therefore can make no judgment of men upon the outward appearance of them. Who would have thought, but that the Pharisee had been a good man ? for he was righteous ; for he prayed. And who could have thought, that the other had been a good man ? for he was a Publican ; a man, by good men and bad men, joined with the worst of men, to wit, with sinners, harlots, heathens.

The Pharisee was a sectarian ; the Publican was an officer. The Pharisee, even because he was a sectarian,

was had the more in esteem ; and the Publican, because he was an officer, was had the more in reproach. To speak a little to both these :

1. The Pharisee was a sectarian ; one that deviated, that turned aside in his worshipping from the way of God, both in matter and manner of worship ; for such an one I count a sectarian. That he turned aside from the matter, which is the rule of worship, to wit, the written word, it is evident ; for Christ saith, that they rejected the commandments of God, and made them of no effect, that they might keep their own traditions. That they turned aside also as to their manner of worship, and became sectarians, there is with no less authority asserted—"For all their works they do for to be seen of men ;" Acts xxvi. 5 ; Mark vii. 9-13 ; Matt. xxiii. 5.

Now this being none of the order or ordinance of Christ, and yet being chosen by, and stuck to of these sort of men, and also made a singular and necessary part of worship, became a sect, or bottom for those hypocritical factious men to adhere unto, and to make of others disciples to themselves. And that they might be admired, and rendered venerable by the simple people to their fellows, they loved to go in long robes ; they loved to pray in markets, and in the corners of the streets ; they shewed great zeal for the small things of the law, but had only great words for things that were substantial—"They made broad their phylacteries, and enlarged the borders of their garments ;" Matt. xxiii.

When I say the Pharisee was a sectarian, I do not mean that every sectarian is a Pharisee. There were the sects of the Herodians, of the Alexandrians, and of the Sadducees, with many others ; but to be a Pharisee, was to be of the straitest sect : "After the most straitest sect of our religion, I lived a Pharisee." That, therefore, of all the sects, was the most strait and strict. Therefore, saith he, in another place, "I was taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers." And again, "Touching the law, a Pharisee ;" Acts xxii. 3 ; xxvi. 4-6 ; Phil. iii. 5. The Pharisee, therefore, did carry the bell, and wear the garland

for religion ; for he outdid, he went beyond all other sectarians in his day. He was strictest, he was the most zealous ; therefore Christ, in his making of this parable, waived all other sects then in being, and pitched upon the Pharisee as the man most meet, by whose rejection he might shew forth and demonstrate the riches of his mercy in its extension to sinners : "Two men went up into the temple to pray ; the one a Pharisee : " such a brave man as you have heard.

2. The Publican also went up thither to pray. The Publican, I told you before, was an officer : an officer that served the Romans and himself too ; for the Romans at that time were possessors of the land of Jewry (the lot of Israel's inheritance), and the emperor Tiberius Cæsar placed over that land four governors, to wit, Pilate, Herod, Philip, and Lysanias ; all these were Gentiles, heathens, infidels ; and the publicans were a sort of inferior men, to whom was let out to farm, and so men that were employed by these to gather up the taxes and customs that the heathens had laid upon the Jews to be paid to the emperor ; Luke ii. 1 ; iii. 1, 2, 12, 13.

But they were a generation of men that were very injurious in the execution of their office. They would exact and demand more than was due of the people ; yea, and if their demands were denied, they would falsely accuse those that so denied them to the governor, and by false accusation obtain the money of the people, and so wickedly enrich themselves, Luke iii. 13, 14 ; xix. 2, 8. This was therefore grievous to the Jews, who always counted themselves a free people, and could never abide to be in bondage to any. And this was something of the reason, that they were so generally by all the Jews counted so vile and base, and reckoned among the worst of men, even as our informers and bum-bailiffs are with us at this day.

But that which heightened the spirit of the people against them, and that made them so odious and filthy in their eyes, was for that (at least so I think) these publicans were not, as the other officers, aliens, heathens, and Gentiles, but men

of their own nation, Jews, and so the brethren of those that they so abused. Had they been Gentiles, it had not been wondered at.

The Publican then was a Jew, a kind of a renegade Jew, that through the love that he had to unjust gains, fell off in his affections from his brethren, adhered to the Romans, and became a kind of servant to them against their brethren, farming the heathenish taxations at the hand of strangers, and exacting of them upon their brethren with much cruelty, falsehood, and extortion. And hence, as I said, it was, that to be a publican, was to be so odious a thing, so vile a sinner, and so grievous a man in the eyes of the Jews. Why, this was the Publican ! he was a Jew, and so should have abode with them, and have been content to share with his brethren in their calamities ; but contrary to nature, to law, to religion, reason, and honesty, he fell in with the heathen, and took the advantage of their tyranny to poll, to rob, and impoverish his brethren.

But for proof that the Publican was a Jew.

1. Publicans are, even then, when compared with, yet distinguished from, the heathen ; “ Let him be to thee as an heathen man and a publican,” Matt. xviii. ; which two terms, I think, must not here be applied to one and the self-same man, as if the heathen was a publican, or the publican a heathen ; but to men of two distinct nations, as that publican and harlot is to be understood of sinners of both sexes. The Publican is not an harlot, for he is a man, &c., and such a man as has been described before. So by publicans and sinners, is meant publicans and such sinners as the Gentiles were ; or such as, by the text, the Publican is distinguished from : where the Pharisee saith he was not an extortioner, unjust, adulterer, or even as this Publican. Nor can he by “ heathen man” intend the person, and by the term publican, the office or place, of the heathen man ; but by publican is meant the renegade Jew, in such a place, &c., as is yet further manifested by that which follows. For—

2. Those publicans, even every one of them that by name

are made mention of in the New Testament, have such names put upon them ; yea, and other circumstances thereunto annexed, as doth demonstrate them to be Jews. I remember the names of no more but three, to wit, Matthew, Levi, and Zaccheus, and they were all Jews.

(1.) Matthew was a Jew, and the same Matthew was a publican ; yea, and also afterwards an apostle. He was a Jew, and wrote his gospel in Hebrew : he was an apostle, and is therefore found among the twelve. That he was a publican too, is as evident by his own words ; for though Mark and Luke, in their mentioning of his name and apostleship, do forbear to call him a publican (Mark iii. 18 ; Luke vi. 15) ; yet when this Matthew comes to speak of himself, he calls himself Matthew the publican (Matth. x. 3) ; for I count this the self-same Matthew that Mark and Luke make mention of, because I find no other Matthew among the apostles but he : Matthew the publican, Matthew the man so deep in apostacy, Matthew the man of that ill fame among his brethren. Love, in Mark and Luke, when they counted him among the apostles, did cover with silence this his publican state (and it is meet for Peter to call Paul his beloved brother, when Paul himself shall call himself the chief of sinners) ; but faithfulness to the world, and a desire to be abased, that Christ thereby, and grace by him, might be advanced, made Matthew, in his evangelical writings, call himself by the name of Matthew the publican. Nor has he lost thereby ; for Christ again to exalt him (as he hath also done by the apostle Paul), hath set, by his special providence, the testimony that this Matthew hath given of his birth, life, death, doctrine, and miracles, in the front of all the New Testament.

(2.) The next publican that I find by the Testament of Christ, made mention of by name, is Levi, another of the apostles of Jesus Christ. This Levi also, by the Holy Ghost in holy writ, is called by the name of James : not James the brother of John, for Zebedee was his father ; but James the son of Alphaeus. Now I take this Levi also to be another than Matthew ; First, because Matthew is not called

the son of Alpheus ; and because Matthew and Levi, or James the son of Alpheus, are distinctly counted where the names of the apostles are mentioned (Matt. x. 3) for two distinct persons : and that this Levi, or James the apostle, was a publican, as was the apostle Matthew, whom we mentioned before, is evident ; for both Mark and Luke do count him such. First, Mark saith, Christ found him when he called him, as he also found Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom ; yea, Luke words it thus : " He went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom, and he said unto him, Follow me ;" Mark ii. 14 ; Luke v. 27.

Now, that this Levi, or James the son of Alpheus, was a Jew, his name doth well make manifest. Besides, had there been among the apostles any more Gentiles save Simon the Canaanite, or if this Levi James had been here, I think the Holy Ghost would, to distinguish him, have included him in the same discriminating character as he did the other, when he called him " Simon the Canaanite ;" Matt. x. 4.

Matthew, therefore, and Levi or James, were both publicans, and, as I think, called both at the same time ; were both publican Jews, and made by grace the apostles of Jesus Christ.

(3.) The next publican that I find by name made mention of in the Testament of Christ, is one Zaccheus. And he was a publican ; yea, for ought I know, the master of them all. " There was a man," saith Luke, " named Zaccheus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich," Luke xix. 2. This man, Christ saith, was a son of Abraham, that is, as other Jews were ; for he spake to stop the mouths of their Pharisaical cavillations. Besides, the Publican shewed himself to be such an one, when under a supposition of wronging any man, he had respect to the Jewish law of restoring four-fold ; Exod. xxii. 1 ; 2 Sam. xii. 6.

It is further manifest that he was a Jew, because Christ puts him among the lost ; to wit, among the lost sheep of

the house of Israel, ver. 10 ; and Matt. xv. 24 ; for Zaccheus was one that might properly be said to be lost, and that in the Jews' account : lost, I say, and that not only in the most common sense, by reason of transgression against the law, but for that he was an apostate Jew, not with reference to heathenish religion, but as to heathenish, cruel, and barbarous actions ; and therefore he was, as the other, by his brethren, counted as bad as heathens, Gentiles, and harlots. But salvation is come to this house, saith Christ, and that notwithstanding his publican practice, forasmuch as he also is the son of Abraham.

3. Again, Christ, by the parable of the lost sheep, doth plainly intimate, that the Publican was a Jew. " Then drew near all the publicans and sinners for to hear him, and the Pharisees and Scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them."

But by what answer doth Christ repel their objections ? Why, he saith, " What man of you having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost until he find it ?" Doth he not here, by the lost sheep, mean the poor publican ? plenty of whom, while he preached this sermon, were there, as objects of the Pharisees' scorn, but of the pity and compassion of Jesus Christ : he did without doubt mean them. For, pray, what was the flock, and who Christ's sheep under the law, but the house and people of Israel ? Ezek. xxxiv. 11. So then, who could be the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but such as were Matthew, James, Zaccheus, and their companions in their and such like transgressions ?

4. Besides, had not the publicans been of the Jews, how easy had it been for the Pharisees to have objected, that an impertinency was couched in that most excellent parable of the lost sheep ? They might have said, We are offended, because thou receivest the publicans, and thou for vindication of thy practice propoundest a parable of lost sheep ; but they are the sinners of the house of Israel, and the publicans are aliens and Gentiles. I say, how easily

might they thus have objected ? but they knew full well, that the parable was pertinent, for that the publicans were of the Jews, and not of the aliens. Yea, had they not been Jews, it cannot, it must not be thought, that Christ (in sum) should call them so ; and yet he did do so, when he called them "lost sheep."

Now, that these publicans were Jews, what follows but that for this they were a great deal the more abominated by their brethren ; and (as I have also hinted before) it is no marvel that they were ; for a treacherous brother is worse than an open enemy, Psalm lv. 12, 13 ; for, if to be debauched in an open and common transgression is odious, how odious is it for a brother to be so ; for a brother in nature and religion to be so. I say again, all this they did, as both John insinuates, and Zaccheus confesses.

The Pharisee, therefore, was not so good, but the Publican was as bad. Indeed the Publican was a notorious wretch, one that had a way of transgressing by himself ; one that could not be sufficiently condemned by the Jews, nor coupled with a viler than himself. It is true, you find him here in the temple at prayer ; not because he retained, in his apostacy, conscience of the true religion ; but God had awakened him, shewed him his sin, and bestowed upon him the grace of repentance, by which he was not only fetched back to the temple and prayer, but to his God, and to the salvation of his soul.

The Pharisee, then, was a man of another complexion, and good as to his own thoughts of himself ; yea, and in the thoughts of others also, upon the highest and better ground by far. The Publican was a notorious sinner : the Pharisee was a reputed righteous man. The Publican was a sinner out of the ordinary way of sinning ; and the Pharisee was a man for righteousness in a singular way also. The Publican pursued his villanies, and the Pharisee pursued his righteousness ; and yet they both met in the temple to pray : yea, the Pharisee stuck to, and boasted in, the law of God : but the Publican did forsake it, and hardened his heart against his way.

Thus diverse were they in their appearances : the Pharisee very good, the Publican very bad : but as to the law of God, which looked upon them with reference to the state of their spirits, and the nature of their actions, by that they were both found sinners ; the Publican an open, outside one, and the Pharisee a filthy, inside one. This is evident, because the best of them was rejected, and the worst of them was received to mercy. Mercy standeth not at the Publican's badness, nor is it enamoured with the Pharisee's goodness : it suffereth not the law to take place on both, though it findeth them both in sin, but graciously embraceth the most unworthy, and leaveth the best to shift for himself. And good reason that both should be dealt with after this manner ; to wit, that the word of grace should be justified upon the soul of the penitent, and that the other should stand or fall to that which he had chosen to be his master.

There are three things that follow upon this discourse.

1. That the righteousness of man is not of any esteem with God, as to justification. It is passed by as a thing of naughtiness, a thing not worth the taking notice of. There was not so much as notice taken of the Pharisee's person or prayer, because he came into the temple mantled up in his own good things.

2. That the man that has nothing to commend him to God, but his own good doings, shall never be in favour with him. This also is evident from the text : the Pharisee had his own righteousness, but had nothing else to commend him to God ; and therefore could not by that obtain favour with God, but abode still a rejected one, and in a state of condemnation.

3. Wherefore, though we are bound by the law of charity to judge of men according as in appearance they present themselves unto us ; yet withal, to wit, though we do so judge, we must leave room for the judgment of God. Mercy may receive him that we have doomed to hell, and justice may take hold on him, whom we have judged to be bound up in the bundle of life. And both

these things are apparent by the persons under consideration.

We, like Joseph, are for setting of Manasseh' before Ephraim ; but God, like Jacob, puts his hands across, and lays his right hand upon the worst man's head, and his left hand upon the best (Gen. xlviii.), to the amazement and wonderment even of the best of men.

"Two men went up into the temple to pray ; the one a Pharisee, and the other a Publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself ; God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this Publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess."

In these words many things are worth the noting. As, *First*, The Pharisee's definition of righteousness ; the which standeth in two things : 1. In negatives ; 2. In positives.

1. In negatives ; to wit, what a man that is righteous must not be : "I am no extortioner, no unjust man, no adulterer, nor yet as this Publican."

2. In positives ; to wit, what a man that is righteous must be : "I fast twice a-week, I give tithes of all that I possess," &c.

That righteousness standeth in negative and positive holiness is true ; but that the Pharisee's definition is, notwithstanding, false, will be manifest by and by. But I will first treat of righteousness in the general, because the text leadeth me to it.

First, then, a man that is righteous, must have negative holiness ; that is, he must not live in actual transgressions ; he must not be an extortioner, unjust, an adulterer, or as the Publican was. And this the apostle intends, when he saith, "Flee fornication," "Flee youthful lusts," "Flee from idolatry ;" and, "Little children keep yourselves from idols ;" 1 Cor. vi. 18 ; x. 14 ; 2 Tim. ii. 22 ; 1 John v. 21. For it is a vain thing to talk of righteousness, and that ourselves are righteous, when every observer shall find us in actual transgression. Yea, though a man shall mix his

want of negative holiness with some good actions, that will not make him a righteous man. As suppose, a man that is a swearer, a drunkard, an adulterer, or the like, should, notwithstanding this, be open-handed to the poor, be a great executor of justice in his place, be exact in his buying, selling, keeping his promise with his friend, or the like ; these things, yea, many more such, cannot make him a righteous man ; for the beginning of righteousness is yet wanting in him, which is this negative holiness : for except a man leave off to do evil, he cannot be a righteous man. Negative holiness is therefore of absolute necessity to make one in one's self a righteous man. This therefore condemns them, that count it sufficient if a man have some actions that in themselves, and by virtue of the command, are good, to make him a righteous man, though negative holiness is wanting. This is as saying to the wicked, Thou art righteous, and a perverting of the right way of the Lord : negative holiness, therefore, must be in a man before he can be accounted righteous.

2. As negative holiness is required to declare one a righteous man ; so also positive holiness must be joined therewith, or the man is unrighteous still. For it is not what a man is not, but what a man does, that declares him a righteous man. Suppose a man be no thief, no liar, no unjust man ; or, as the Pharisee saith, no extortioner, nor adulterer, &c., this will not make a righteous man ; but there must be joined to these, holy and good actions, before he can be declared a righteous man. Wherefore, as the apostle, when he pressed the Christians to righteousness, did put them first upon negative holiness, so he joineth thereto an exhortation to positive holiness ; knowing, that where positive holiness is wanting, all the negative holiness in the whole world cannot declare a man a righteous man. When therefore he had said, " But thou, O man of God, flee these things" (sin and wickedness), he adds, " and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness," &c. ; 1 Tim. vi. 11. Here Timothy is exhorted to negative holiness, when he is bid to flee sin. Here also

he is exhorted to positive holiness, when he is bid to follow after righteousness, &c. ; for righteousness can neither stand in negative nor positive holiness, as severed one from another. That man then, and that man only, is, as to actions, a righteous man, that hath left off to do evil, and hath learned to do well, Isa. i. 16, 17 ; that hath cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light. "Flee youthful lusts (said Paul), but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart ;" 2 Tim. ii. 22.

The Pharisee, therefore, as to the general description of righteousness, made his definition right ; but as to his person and personal righteousness, he made his definition wrong. I do not mean he defined his own righteousness wrong ; but I mean his definition of true righteousness, which standeth in negative and positive holiness, he made to stoop to justify his own righteousness, and therein he played the hypocrite in his prayer : for although it is true righteousness that standeth in negative and positive holiness ; yet that this is not true righteousness that standeth, but in some pieces and ragged remnants of negative and positive righteousness. If then the Pharisee would, in his definition of personal righteousness, have proved his own righteousness to be good, he must have proved, that both his negative and positive holiness had been universal ; to wit, that he had left off to act in any wickedness, and that he had given up himself to the duty enjoined in every commandment : for so the righteous man is described ; Job i. 8 ; ii. 3. As it is said of Zacharias and Elisabeth his wife, "They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless ;" Luke i. 5, 6. Here the perfection, that is, the universality, of their negative holiness is implied, and the universality of their positive holiness is expressed : they walked in all the commandments of the Lord ; but that they could not do, if they had lived in any unrighteous thing or way. They walked in all blamelessly, that is, sincerely, with upright hearts. The Pharisee's right-

cousness, therefore, even by his own implied definition of righteousness, was not good, as is manifest these two ways—

1. His negative holiness was not universal.

2. His positive holiness was rather ceremonial than moral.

1. His negative holiness was not universal. He saith indeed, he was not an extortioner, nor unjust, no adulterer, nor yet as this Publican: but none of these expressions apart, nor all, if put together, do prove him to be perfect as to negative holiness; that is, they do not prove him, should it be granted, that he was as holy with this kind of holiness, as himself of himself had testified. For,

(1.) What though he was no extortioner, he might yet be a covetous man; Luke xvi. 14.

(2.) What though, as to dealing, he was not unjust to others, yet he wanted honesty to do justice to his own soul; Luke xvi. 15.

(3.) What though he was free from the act of adultery, he might yet be made guilty by an adulterous eye, against which the Pharisee did not watch (Matt. v. 28), of which the Pharisee did not take cognizance.

(4.) What though he was not like the Publican, yet he was like, yea was, a downright hypocrite; he wanted in those things wherein he boasted himself, sincerity; but without sincerity no action can be good, or accounted of God as righteous. The Pharisee, therefore, notwithstanding his boast, was deficient in his righteousness, though he would fain have shrouded it under the right definition thereof.

(5.) Nor doth his positive holiness help him at all, forasmuch as it is grounded mostly, if not altogether, in ceremonial holiness: nay, I will recollect myself, it was grounded partly in ceremonial and partly in superstitious holiness, if there be such a thing as superstitious holiness in the world; this paying of tithes was ceremonial, such as came in and went out with the typical priesthood. But what is that to positive holiness, when it was but a small

pittance by the by. Had the Pharisee argued plainly and honestly ; I mean, had he so dealt with that law, by which now he sought to be justified, he should have brought forth positive righteousness in morals, and should have said and proved it too, that as he was no wicked man with reference to the act of wickedness, he was indeed a righteous man in acts of moral virtues. He should, I say, have proved himself a true lover of God, no superstitious one, but a sincere worshipper of him ; for this is contained in the first table (Exod. xx.), and is so in sum expounded by the Lord Christ himself (Mark xii. 30). He should also, in the next place, have proved himself truly kind, compassionate, liberal, and full of love and charity to his neighbour ; for that is the sum of the second table, as our Lord doth expound it, saying, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;" Mark xii. 31.

True, he says, he did them no hurt ; but did he do them good ? To do no hurt, is one thing ; and to do good, is another ; and it is possible for a man to do neither hurt nor good to his neighbour. What then, is he a righteous man because he hath done him no hurt ? No, verily ; unless, to his power, he hath also done him good.

It is therefore a very fallacious and deceitful arguing of the Pharisee, thus to speak before God in his prayers : I am righteous, because I have not hurt my neighbour, and because I have acted in ceremonial duties. Nor will that help him at all to say, he gave tithes of all that he possessed. It had been more modest to say, that he had paid them ; for they, being commanded, were a due debt ; nor could they go before God for a free gift, because, by the commandment, they were made a payment ; but proud men and hypocrites love so to word it both with God and man, as at least to imply, that they are more forward to do, than God's command is to require them to do.

The second part of his positive holiness was superstitious ; for God had appointed no such set fasts, neither more nor less but just twice a-week : "I fast twice a-week." Ay, but who did command thee to do so, other than by

thy being put upon it by a superstitious and erroneous conscience, doth not, nor canst thou make to appear. This part, therefore, of this positive righteousness, was positive superstition, and abuse of God's law, and a gratification of thy own erroneous conscience. Hitherto, therefore, thou art defective in thy so seemingly brave and glorious righteousness.

Yet this let me say, in commendation of the Pharisee, in my conscience he was better than many of our English Christians; for many of them are so far off from being at all partakers of positive righteousness, that neither all their ministers, Bibles, and good books, good sermons, nor yet God's judgments, can persuade them to become so much as negatively holy, that is, to leave off evil.

The second thing that I take notice of in this prayer of the Pharisee, is his manner of delivery, as he stood praying in the temple: "God, I thank thee," said he, "that I am not as other men are." He seemed to be at this time in more than an ordinary frame, while now he stood in the presence of the divine Majesty: for a prayer made up of praise, is a prayer made up of the highest order, and is most like the way of them that are now in a state beyond prayer. Praise is the work of heaven; but we see here, that an hypocrite may get into that vein, even while an hypocrite, and while on earth below. Nor do I think that this prayer of his was a premeditated stinted form, but a prayer *extempore*, made on a sudden according to what he felt, thought, or understood of himself.

Here therefore we may see, that even prayer, as well as other acts of religious worship, may be performed in great hypocrisy; although I think, that to perform prayer in hypocrisy, is one of the most daring sins that are committed by the sons of men. For by prayer, above all duties, is our most direct and immediate personal approach into the presence of God; as there is an uttering of things before him, especially a giving to him of thanks for things received, or a begging that such and such things might be bestowed upon me. But now, to do these things in hypocrisy (and it

is easy to do them so, when we go up into the temple to pray), must needs be intolerable wickedness, and it argueth infinite patience in God, that he should let such as do so arise alive from their knees, or that he should suffer them to go away from the place where they stand, without some token or mark of his wrath upon them.

I also observe, that this *extempore* prayer of the Pharisee was performed by himself, or in the strength of his own natural parts; for so the text implieth. "The Pharisee," saith the text, "stood and prayed thus with himself," or "by himself," and may signify, either that he spoke softly, or that he made this prayer by reason of his natural parts. "I will pray with the Spirit," said Paul; 1 Cor. xiv. 15. "The Pharisee prayed with himself," said Christ. It is at this day wonderfully common for men to pray *extempore* also; to pray by a book, by a premeditated set form, is now out of fashion. He is counted nobody now, that cannot at any time, at a minute's warning, make a prayer of half an hour long. I am not against *extempore* prayer, for I believe it to be the best kind of praying; but yet I am jealous, that there are a great many such prayers made, especially in pulpits and public meetings, without the breathing of the Holy Ghost in them; for if a Pharisee of old could do so, why not a Pharisee do the same now? Wit and reason, and notion, are not screwed up to a very great height; nor do men want words, or fancies, or pride, to make them do this thing. Great is the formality of religion this day, and little the power thereof. Now, where there is a great form, and little power (and such there was among the Jews, in the time of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ), there men are most strangely under the temptation to be hypocrites; for nothing doth so properly and directly oppose hypocrisy, as the power and glory of the things we profess. And so, on the contrary, nothing is a greater temptation to hypocrisy, than a form of knowledge of things without the savour thereof. Nor can much of the power and savour of the things of the gospel be seen at this day upon professors (I speak not now of all), if their no-

tions and conversations be compared together. How proud, how covetous, how like the world in garb and guise, in words and actions, are most of the great professors of this our day ! But when they come to divine worship, especially to pray, by their words and carriage there, one would almost judge them to be angels in heaven. But such things must be done in hypocrisy, as also the Pharisee's was.

"The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself."

And in that it is said he prayed with himself, it may signify, that he went in his prayer no further than his sense and reason, feeling and carnal apprehensions went. True Christian prayer oftentimes leaves sense and reason, feeling and carnal apprehensions, behind it ; and it goeth forth with faith, hope, and desires to know what at present we are ignorant of, and that unto which our sense, feeling, reason, &c., are strangers. The apostle indeed doth say, "I will pray with the understanding ;" 1 Cor. xiv. 15 ; but then it must be taken for an understanding spiritually enlightened. I say, it must be so understood, because the natural understanding, as such, receiveth not the things of God, therefore cannot pray for them ; for they to such are foolish things ; 1 Cor. ii. 14.

Now, a spiritually enlightened understanding may be officious in prayer these ways—

1. As it has received conviction of the truth of the being of the Spirit of God ; for to receive conviction of the truth and being of such things, comes from the Spirit of God, not from the law, sense, or reason ; 1 Cor. ii. 10–12. Now the understanding having, by the Holy Ghost, received conviction of the truth of things, draweth out the heart to cry in prayer to God for them. Therefore he saith, he would pray with the understanding.

2. The spiritually enlightened understanding hath also received, by the Holy Ghost, conviction of the excellency and glory of the things that are of the Spirit of God, and so inflameth the heart with more fervent desires in this duty of prayer ; for there is a supernatural excellency in the things that are of the Spirit : "For if the ministration of

death (to which the Pharisee adhered), written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses, for the glory of his countenance, which glory was to be done away ; how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious ? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory : for even that which was made glorious hath no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth ;" 2 Cor. iii. 7-10. And the Spirit of God sheweth, at least, some things of that excellent glory of them to the understanding that it enlighteneth ; Eph. i. 17-19.

3. The spiritually enlightened understanding hath also thereby received knowledge, that these excellent supernatural things of the Spirit are given by covenant in Christ to those that love God, and are beloved of him. " Now we have received," says Paul, " not the spirit of the world (that the Pharisee had), but the Spirit which is of God, that we may know the things that are freely given to us of God ;" 1 Cor. ii. 12. And this knowledge, that the things of the Spirit of God are freely given to us of God, puts yet a greater edge, more vigour, and yet further confidence, into the heart to ask for what is mine by gift, by a free gift of God in his Son. But all these things the poor Pharisee was an utter stranger to ; he knew not the Spirit, nor the things of the Spirit, and therefore must neglect faith, judgment, and the love of God, Matt. xxiii. 23 ; Luke xi. 42, and follow himself only, as to his sense, feeling, reason, and carnal imagination in prayer.

He stood and prayed thus " with himself." He prayed thus, talking to himself ; for so also it may (I think) be understood. It is said of the unjust judge, " He said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man," &c., Luke xviii. 4 ; that is, he said it to himself. So the Pharisee is said to pray with himself : God and the Pharisee were not together, there was only the Pharisee and himself. Paul knew not what to pray for without the Holy Ghost joined himself with him, and helping him

with groans unutterable ; but the Pharisee had no need of that ; it was enough that he and himself were together at this work ; for he thought without doubting that he and himself together could do. How many times have I heard ancient men, and ancient women at it with themselves, when all alone in some private room, or in some solitary path ; and in their chat they have been sometimes reasoning, sometimes chiding, sometimes pleading, sometimes praying, and sometimes singing ; but yet all has been done by themselves when all alone ; but yet so done, as one that has not seen them must needs have concluded that they were talking, singing, and praying with company, when all that they had said, they did it with themselves, and had neither auditor nor regarder.

So the Pharisee was at it with himself ; he and himself performed, at this time, the duty of prayer. Now I observe, that usually when men do speak to or with themselves, they greatly strive to please themselves : therefore it is said, there is a man "that flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful ;" Psalm xxxvi. 2. He flattereth himself in his own way, according as his sense and carnal reason dictate to him ; and he might do it as well in prayer as in any other way. Some men will so hear sermons and apply them that they may please themselves ; and some men will pray, but will refuse such words and thoughts in prayer as will not please themselves.

O how many men speak all that they speak in prayer, rather to themselves, or to their auditory, than to God that dwelleth in heaven. And this I take to be the manner, I mean something of the manner, of the Pharisee's praying. Indeed, he made mention of God, as also others do ; but he prayed with himself to himself, in his own spirit, and to his own pleasing, as the matter of his prayer doth manifest. For was it not pleasant to this hypocrite, think you, to speak thus well of himself at this time ? Doubtless it was. Also children and fools are of the same temper with hypocrites, as to this : they also love, without ground, as

the Pharisee, to flatter themselves in their own eyes; "But not he that commendeth himself is approved."

"God, I thank thee, I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this Publican," &c.

Thus he begins his prayer; and it is, as was hinted before, a prayer of the highest strain. For to make a prayer all of thanksgiving, and to urge in that prayer the cause of that thanksgiving, is the highest manner of praying, and seems to be done in the strongest faith, &c., in the greatest sense of things. And such was the Pharisee's prayer, only he wanted substantial ground for his thanksgiving; to wit, he wanted proof of that he said, He was not as other men were, except he had meant, as he did not, that he was even of the worst sort of men: For even the best of men by nature, and the worst, are all alike. "What, then, are we better than they? (saith Paul), No, in nowise;" Rom. iii. 9. So then he failed in the ground of his thankfulness, and therefore his thankfulness was grounded on untruth, and so became feigned and self-flattering, and could not be acceptable with the God of heaven.

Besides, in this high prayer of the Pharisee, he fathered that upon God which he could by no means own; to wit, that he being so good as he thought himself to be, was through distinguishing love and favour of God—"God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are." I thank thee, that thou hast made me better than others; I thank thee that my condition is so good, and that I am so far advanced above my neighbour.

There are several things flow from this prayer of the Pharisee that are worth our observation: as—

1. That the Pharisees and hypocrites do not love to count themselves sinners, when they stand before God. They choose rather to commend themselves before him for virtuous and holy persons, sometimes saying, and oftener thinking, that they are more righteous than others. Yea, it seems by the word to be natural, hereditary, and so common for hypocrites to trust to themselves that they are

righteous, and then to condemn others : this is the foundation upon which this very parable is built : " He spake this parable (saith Luke) unto certain which trusted in themselves as being righteous," or " that they were " so, " and despised others," ver. 9.

I say, hypocrites love not to think of their sins, when they stand in the presence of God ; but rather to muster up, and to present him with their several good deeds, and to venture a standing or falling by them.

2. This carriage of the Pharisee before God informs us, that moral virtues, and the ground of them, which is the law, if trusted to, blinds the mind of man that he cannot for them perceive the way to happiness. While Moses is read (and his law and the righteousness thereof trusted to), the vail is upon their heart ; and even unto this day (said Paul) the vail remaineth " untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament, which vail is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart ;" 2 Cor. iii. 14, 15. And this is the reason so many moral men, that are adorned with civil and moral righteousness, are yet so ignorant of themselves, and the way of life by Christ.

The law of works, and the righteousness of the flesh, which is the righteousness of the law, blinds their minds, shuts up their eyes, and causeth them to miss of the righteousness that they are so hotly in the pursuit of. Their minds were blinded, saith the text. Whose minds ? Why those that adhered to, that stood by, and that sought righteousness of the law. Now,

The Pharisee was such an one ; he rested in the law, he made his boast of God, and trusted to himself that he was righteous ; all this proceeded of that blindness and ignorance that the law had possessed his mind withal ; for it is not granted to the law to be the ministration of life and light, but to be the ministration of death, when it speaks ; and of darkness, when trusted unto, that the Son of God might have the pre-eminence in all things : therefore it is

said when the heart "shall turn to him, the vail shall be taken away;" 2 Cor. iii. 16.

3. We may see by this prayer, the strength of vain confidence; it will embolden a man to stand in a lie before God; it will embolden a man to trust to himself, and to what he hath done; yea, to plead his own goodness, instead of God's mercy, before him. For the Pharisee was not only a man that justified himself before men, but that justified himself before God; and what was the cause of his so justifying himself before God, but that vain confidence that he had in himself and his works, which were both a cheat and a lie to himself? But I say, the boldness of the man was wonderful, for he stood to the lie that was in his right hand, and pleaded the goodness of it before him.

But besides these things, there are four things more that are couched in this prayer of the Pharisee.

1. By this prayer the Pharisee doth appropriate to himself conversion; he challengeth it to himself and to his fellows. "I am not," saith he, "as other men;" that is, in unconversion, in a state of sin, wrath, and death: and this must be his meaning, for the religion of the Pharisee was not grounded upon any particular natural privilege: I mean not singly, not only upon that, but upon a falling in with those principles, notions, opinions, decrees, traditions, and doctrines that they taught distinct from the true and holy doctrines of the prophets. And they made to themselves disciples by such doctrine, men that they could captivate by those principles, laws, doctrines, and traditions: and therefore such are said to be of the sect of the Pharisees: that is, the scholars and disciples of them, converted to them and to their doctrine. O! it is easy for souls to appropriate conversion to themselves, that know not what conversion is. It is easy, I say, for men to lay conversion to God, on a legal, or ceremonial, or delusive bottom, on such a bottom that will sink under the burden that is laid upon it; on such a bottom that will not stand when it is brought under the touchstone of God, nor against the rain, wind,

and floods that are ordained to put it to the trial, whether it is true or false. The Pharisee here stands upon a supposed conversion to God ; “ I am not as other men ;” but both he and his conversion are rejected by the sequel of the parable : “ That which is highly esteemed among men” (Luke xvi. 15) “ is abomination in the sight of God.” That is, that conversion, that men, as men, flatter themselves that they have, is such. But the Pharisee will be a converted man, he will have more to shew for heaven than his neighbour—“ I am not as other men are ;” to wit, in a state of sin and condemnation, but in a state of conversion and salvation. But see how grievously this sect, this religion, beguiled men. It made them twofold worse the children of hell than they were before, and than their teachers were, Matth. xxiii. 15 ; that is, their doctrine begat such blindness, such vain confidence, and groundless boldness in their disciples, as to involve them in that conceit of conversion that was false, and so if trusted to, damnable.

2. By these words, we find the Pharisee, not only appropriating conversion to himself, but rejoicing in that conversion : “ God, I thank thee,” saith he, “ that I am not as other men ;” which saying of his gives us to see that he gloried in his conversion ; he made no doubt at all of his state, but lived in the joy of the safety that he supposed his soul, by his conversion, to be in. Oh ! thanks to God, says he, I am not in the state of sin, death, and damnation, as the unjust, and this Publican is. What a strange delusion, to trust to the spider’s web, and to think that a few, or the most fine of the works of the flesh, would be sufficient to bear up the soul in, at, and under the judgment of God ! “ There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed from their filthiness.” This text can be so fitly applied to none as the Pharisee, and to those that tread in the Pharisee’s steps, and that are swallowed up with his conceits, and with the glory of their own righteousness.

So again, “ There is a way” (a way to heaven) “ which seemeth right to a man, but the end thereof are the ways

of death ;" Prov. xxx. 12 ; xiv. 12. This also is fulfilled in these kind of men ; at the end of their way is death and hell, notwithstanding their confidence in the goodness of their state.

Again, " There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing ;" Prov. xiii. 7. What can be more plain from all these texts, than that some men that are out of the way think themselves in it ; and that some men think themselves clean, that are yet in their filthiness, and that think themselves rich for the next world, and yet are poor, and miserable, and wretched, and blind, and naked. Thus the poor, blind, naked, hypocritical Pharisee thought of himself, when God threatened to abase him : yea, he thought himself thus, and joyed therein, when indeed he was going down to the chambers of death.

3. By these words, the Pharisee seems to put the goodness of his condition upon the goodness of God. I am not as other men are, and I thank God for it. " God (saith he), I thank thee, that I am not as other men are." He thanked God, when God had done nothing for him. He thanked God, when the way that he was in was not of God's prescribing, but of his own inventing. So the persecutor thanks God that he was put into that way of roguery that the devil had put him into, when he fell to rending and tearing of the church of God ; " Their possessors slay them (saith the prophet), and hold themselves not guilty : and they that sell them say, Blessed be the Lord, for I am rich ;" Zech. xi. 5. I remember that Luther used to say, " In the name of God begins all mischief." All must be fathered upon God : the Pharisee's conversion must be fathered upon God ; the right, or rather the villany of the outrageous persecution against God's people, must be fathered upon God. " God, I thank thee," and, " Blessed be God," must be the burden of the heretic's song. So again, the free-willer, he will ascribe all to God ; the Quaker, the Ranter, the Socinian, &c., will ascribe all to God. " God, I thank thee," is in every man's mouth, and must be entailed to every error, delusion, and damnable doctrine that is in the world : but

the name of God, and their doctrine, worship, and way, hangeth together, as the Pharisee's doctrine ; that is to say, by nothing at all : for God hath not proposed their principles, nor doth he own them, nor hath he commanded them, nor doth he convey by them the least grace or mercy to them ; but rather rejecteth them, and holdeth them for his enemies, and for the destroyers of the world.

4. We come, in the next place, to the ground of all this, and that is, to what the Pharisee had attained ; to wit, that he was no extortioner, no unjust man, no adulterer, nor even as this Publican, and for that he fasted twice a-week, and paid tithes of all that he possessed. So that you see he pretended to a double foundation for his salvation, a moral and a ceremonial one ; but both very lean, weak, and feeble : for the first of his foundation, what is it more, if all be true that he saith, but a being removed a few inches from the vilest men in their vilest actions ? a very slender matter to build my confidence for heaven upon.

And for the second part of his ground for life, what is it but a couple of ceremonies, if so good ? the first is questioned as a thing not founded in God's law ; and the second is such, as is of the remotest sort of ceremonies, that teach and preach the Lord Jesus. But suppose them to be the best, and his conformity to them the thoroughest, they never were ordained to get to heaven by, and so are become but a sandy foundation. But any thing will serve some men for a foundation and support for their souls, and to build their hopes of heaven upon. I am not a drunkard, says one, nor a liar, nor a swearer, nor a thief, and therefore I thank God, I have hopes of heaven and glory. I am not an extortioner, nor an adulterer ; not unjust, nor yet as this Publican ; and therefore do hope I shall go to heaven. Alas, poor men ! will your being furnished with these things save you from the thundering claps and vehement batteries that the wrath of God will make upon sin and sinners in the day that shall burn like an oven ? No, no ; nothing at that day can shroud a man from the hot rebukes of that vengeance, but the very righteousness of

God, which is not the righteousness of the law, however christened, named, or garnished with all the righteousness of man.

But, O thou blind Pharisee ! since thou art so confident that thy state is good, and thy righteousness is that that will stand when it shall be tried with fire (1 Cor. iii. 13), let me now reason with thee of righteousness. My terror shall not make thee afraid ; I am not God, but a man as thou art ; we both are formed out of the clay.

First, Prithee, when didst thou begin to be righteous ? Was it before or after thou hadst been a sinner ? Not before, I dare say ; but if after, then the sins that thou pollutedst thyself withal before, have made thee incapable of acting legal righteousness : for sin, where it is, pollutes, defiles, and makes vile the whole man ; therefore thou canst not by after acts of obedience make thyself just in the sight of that God thou pretendest now to stand praying unto. Indeed thou mayst cover thy dirt, and paint thy sepulchre ; for that acts of after obedience will do, though sin has gone before. But, Pharisee, God can see through the white of this wall, even to the dirt that is within : God can also see through the paint and garnish of thy beauteous sepulchre, to the dead men's bones that are within ; nor can any of thy most holy duties, nor all when put together, blind the eye of the all-seeing Majesty from beholding all the uncleanness of thy soul (Matt. xxiii. 27.) Stand not therefore so stoutly to it, now thou art before God ; sin is with thee, and judgment and justice is before him. It becomes thee, therefore, rather to despise and abhor this life, and to count all thy doings but dross and dung, and to be content to be justified with another's righteousness instead of thy own. This is the way to be secured. I say, blind Pharisee, this is the way to be secured from the wrath which is to come.

There is nothing more certain than this, that as to justification from the curse of the law, God has rejected man's righteousness, for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof, and hath accepted in the room of that the glorious right-

eousness of his Son ; because indeed that, and that only, is universal, perfect, and equal with his justice and holiness. This is in a manner the contents of the whole Bible, and therefore must needs be more certainly true. Now then, Mr Pharisee, methinks, what if thou didst this, and that while thou art at thy prayers, to wit, cast in thy mind what doth God love most ? and the resolve will be at hand. The best righteousness, surely the best righteousness ; for that thy reason will tell thee : This done, even while thou art at thy devotion, ask thyself again, But who has the best righteousness ? and that resolve will be at hand also ; to wit, he that in person is equal with God, and that is his Son Jesus Christ ; he that is separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens, and that is his Son Jesus Christ ; he that did no sin, nor had any guile found in his mouth ; and there never was any such he in all the world but the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

Now, Pharisee, when thou hast done this, then, as thou art at thy devotion, ask again, But what is this best righteousness, the righteousness of Christ, to do ? and the answer will be ready. It is to be made by an act of the sovereign grace of God over to the sinner that shall dare to trust thereto for justification from the curse of the law. "He is made unto us of God, righteousness." "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin ; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth ;" 1 Cor. i. 30 ; 2 Cor. v. 21 ; Rom. x. 4.

This done, and concluded on, then turn again, Pharisee, and say thus with thyself—Is it most safe for me to trust in this righteousness of God, this righteousness of God-man, this righteousness of Christ ? Certainly it is ; since, by the text, it is counted the best, and that which is best pleaseth God ; since it is that which God hath appointed, that sinners shall be justified withal. For "in the Lord have we righteousness" if we believe : and, "in the Lord we are justified, and do glory ;" Isa. xlv. 24, 25.

Nay, Pharisee, suppose thine own righteousness should

be as long, as broad, as high, as deep, as perfect, as good, even every way as good, as the righteousness of Christ ; yet since God has chosen, by Christ, to reconcile us to himself, canst thou attempt to seek by thy own righteousness to reconcile thyself to God, and not attempt (at least) to confront this righteousness of Christ before God ; yea, to challenge it by acceptance of thy person contrary to God's design ?

Suppose, that when the king has chosen one to be judge in the land, and has determined that he shall be judge in all cases, and that by his verdict every man's judgment shall stand ; I say, suppose, after this, another should arise, and of his own head resolve to do his own business himself. Now, though he should be every whit as able, yea, and suppose he should do it as justly and righteously too, yet his making of himself a judge, would be an affront to the king, and an act of rebellion, and so a transgression worthy of punishment.

Why, Pharisee, God hath appointed, that by the righteousness of his Son, and by that righteousness only, men shall be justified in his sight from the curse of the law. Wherefore, take heed, and at thy peril, whatever thy righteousness is, confront not the righteousness of Christ therewith. I say, bring it not in, let it not plead for thee at the bar of God, nor do thou plead for that in his court of justice ; for thou canst not do this and be innocent. If he trust to his righteousness, he hath sinned, says Ezekiel. Mark the text, " When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live ; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousness shall not be remembered : but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it ;" Ezek. xxxiii. 13.

Observe a few things from this text ; and they are these that follow.

1. Here is a righteous man ; a man with whom we do not hear that the God of heaven finds fault.

2. Here is a promise made to this man, that he shall surely live ; but on this condition, that he trust not to his

own righteousness. Whence it is manifest, that the promise of life to this righteous man, is not for the sake of his righteousness, but for the sake of something else; to wit, the righteousness of Christ.

1. Not for the sake of his own righteousness. This is evident, because we are permitted, yea, commanded, to trust in the righteousness that saveth us. The righteousness of God is unto us all, and upon all that believe; that is, trust in it, and trust to it for justification. Now therefore, if thy righteousness, when most perfect, could save thee, thou mightst, yea oughtst, most boldly to trust therein. But since thou art forbidden to trust to it, it is evident it cannot save; nor is it for the sake of that, that the righteous man is saved; Rom. iii. 21, 22.

2. But for the sake of something else, to wit, for the sake of the righteousness of Christ, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus;" Rom. iii. 25, 26; see Phil. iii. 6-8.

"If he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousness shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed (in trusting to his own righteousness), he shall die for it."

Note hence further.

1. That there is more virtue in one sin to destroy, than in all thy righteousness to save thee alive. If he trust, if he trust ever so little, if he do at all trust to his own righteousness, all his righteousness shall be forgotten; and by, and for, and in, the sin that he hath committed, in trusting to it, he shall die.

2. Take notice also, that there are more damnable sins than those that are against the moral law. By which of the ten commandments is trusting to our own righteousness forbidden? Yet it is a sin: it is a sin therefore forbidden by the gospel, and is included, lurketh close in, yea,

is the very root of, unbelief itself; "He that believes not shall be damned." But he that trusteth in his own righteousness doth not believe, neither in the truth, nor sufficiency of the righteousness of Christ to save him, therefore he shall be damned.

But how is it manifest, that he that trusteth to his own righteousness, doth it through a doubt, or unbelief of the truth or sufficiency of the righteousness of Christ?

I answer, because he trusteth to his own. A man will never willingly choose to trust to the worst of helps, when he believes there is a better as near, and to be had as soon, and that too, upon as easy, if not more easy terms. If he that trusteth to his own righteousness for life, did believe that there is indeed such a thing as the righteousness of Christ to justify, and that this righteousness of Christ has in it all-sufficiency to do that blessed work, be sure he would choose that, thereon to lay, lean, and venture his soul, that he saw was the best, and most sufficient to save; especially when he saw also (and see that he must, when he sees the righteousness of Christ), to wit, that that is to be obtained as soon, because as near, and to be had on as easy terms: nay, upon easier than man's own righteousness. I say, he would sooner choose it, because of the weight of salvation, of the worth of salvation, and of the fearful sorrow that to eternity will overtake him that in this thing shall miscarry. It is for heaven, it is to escape hell, wrath, and damnation, saith the soul; and therefore I will, I must, I dare not but choose that, and that only, that I believe to be the best and most sufficient help in so great a concern as soul-concern is. So then he that trusteth to his own righteousness, does it of unbelief of the sufficiency of the righteousness of Christ to save him.

Wherefore this sin of trusting to his own righteousness is a most high transgression; because it contemneth the righteousness of Christ, which is the only righteousness that is sufficient to save from the curse of the law. It also disalloweth the design of heaven, and the excellency of the mystery of the wisdom of God, in designing this way of

salvation for man. What shall I say, It also seeketh to rob God of the honour of the salvation of man. It seeketh to take the crown from the head of Christ, and to set it upon the hypocrite's head ; therefore, no marvel that this one sin be of that weight, virtue, and power, as to sink that man and his righteousness into hell, that leaneth thereon, or trusteth unto it.

But, Pharisee, I need not talk thus unto thee ; for thou art not the man that hath that righteousness that God findeth not fault withal ; nor is it to be found, but with him that is ordained to be the Saviour of mankind ; nor is there any such one besides Jesus, who is called Christ. What madness then has brought thee into the temple, there in an audacious manner to stand and vaunt before God, saying, " God, I thank thee, I am not as other men are ?"

Dost thou not know, that he that breaks one, breaks all the commandments of God ; and consequently, that he that keeps not all, keeps none at all of the commandments of God ? Saith not the scripture the same ? " For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all ;" Jam. ii. 10. Be confounded then, be confounded.

Dost thou know the God with whom now thou hast to do ? He is a God that cannot (as he is just) accept of an half righteousness for a whole ; of a lame righteousness for a sound ; of a sick righteousness for a well and healthy one ; Mal. i. 7, 8. And if so, how should he then accept of that which is no righteousness ? I say, how should he accept of that which is none at all, for thine is only such ? And if Christ said, " When you have done all, say, We are unprofitable," how camest thou to say, before thou hadst done one thing well, I am better, more righteous than other men ?

Didst thou believe, when thou saidst it, that God knew thy heart ? Hadst thou said this to the Publican, it had been a high and rampant expression ; but to say this before God, to the face of God, when he knew that thou wert vile, and a sinner from the womb, and from the conception,

spoils all. It was spoken to put a check to thy arrogance, when Christ said, "Ye are they that justify yourselves before men ; but God knoweth your hearts ;" Luke xvi. 15.

Hast thou taken notice of this, that God judgeth the fruit by the heart from whence it comes ? "A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is good ; and an evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is evil ;" Luke vi. 45. Nor can it be otherwise concluded, but that thou art an evil man, and so that all thy supposed good is nought but badness ; for that thou hast made it to stand in the room of Jesus, and hast dared to commend thyself to the living God thereby : for thou hast trusted in thy shadow of righteousness, and committed iniquity. Thy sin hath melted away thy righteousness, and turned it to nothing but dross ; or, if you will, to the early dew, like to which it goeth away, and so can by no means do thee good, when thou shalt stand in need of salvation and eternal life of God.

But, further, thou sayst thou art righteous ; but they are but vain words. Knowest thou not that thy zeal, which is the life of thy righteousness, is preposterous in many things ? What else means thy madness, and the rage thereof, against men as good as thyself. True, thy being ignorant that they are good, may save thee from the commission of the sin that is unpardonable ; but it will never keep thee from spot in God's sight, but will make both thee and thy righteousness culpable.

Paul, who was once as brave a Pharisee as thou canst be, calleth much of that zeal which he in that estate was possessed with, and lived in the exercise of, madness ; yea, exceeding madness (Acts xxvi. 9-11 ; Phil. iii. 5, 6) ; and of the same sort is much of thine, and it must be so ; for a lawyer, a man for the law, and that resteth in it, must be a persecutor ; yea, a persecutor of righteous men, and that of zeal to God ; because by the law is begotten, through the weakness that it meeteth with in thee, sourness, bitterness of spirit, and anger against him that rightfully condemneth thee of folly, for choosing to trust to thy own righteous-

ness when a better is provided of God to save us; Gal. iv. 28-31. Thy righteousness therefore is deficient; yea, thy zeal for the law, and the men of the law, has joined madness with thy moral virtues, and made thy righteousness unrighteousness: how then canst thou be upright before the Lord?

Further, has not the pride of thy spirit in this hot-headed zeal for thy Pharisaical notions run thee upon thinking that thou art able to do more than God hath enjoined thee, and so able to make thyself more righteous than God requireth thou shouldst be? What else is the cause of thy adding laws to God's laws, precepts to God's precepts, and traditions to God's appointment? Mark vii. Nay, hast thou not, by thus doing, condemned the law of want of perfection, and so the God that gave it, of want of wisdom and faithfulness to himself and thee?

Nay, I say again, hath not thy thus doing charged God with being ignorant of knowing what rules there needed to be imposed on his creatures to make their obedience complete? And doth not this madness of thine intimate, moreover, that if thou hadst not stepped in with the bundle of thy traditions, righteousness had been imperfect, not through man's weakness, but through impediment in God, or in his ministering rules of righteousness unto us?

Now, when thou hast thought on these things, fairly answer thyself these few questions. Is not this arrogancy? Is not this blasphemy? Is not this to condemn God, that thou mightst be righteous? And dost thou think, this is indeed the way to be righteous?

But again, what means thy preferring of thine own rules, laws, statutes, ordinances, and appointments, before the rules, laws, statutes, and appointments of God? Thinkest thou this to be right? Whither will thy zeal, thy pride, and thy folly carry thee? Is there more reason, more equity, more holiness in thy tradition, than in the holy, and just, and good commandments of God? Rom. vii. 12. Why then, I say, dost thou reject the commandment of God, to keep thine own tradition? Yea, why dost thou

rage, and rail, and cry out, when men keep not thy law, or the rule of thine order, and tradition of thine elders, and yet shut thine eyes, or wink with them, when thou thyself shalt live in the breach of the law of God? Yea, why wilt thou condemn men, when they keep not thy law, but study for an excuse, yea, plead for them that live in the breach of God's? Mark vii. 10-13. Will this go for righteousness in the day of God Almighty? Nay, rather, will not this, like a mill-stone about thy neck, drown thee in the deeps of hell? O the blindness, the madness, the pride, that dwells in the hearts of these pretended righteous men!

Again, What kind of righteousness of thine is this that standeth in a mis-esteeming of God's commands? Some thou settest too high, and some too low; as in the text, thou hast set a ceremony above faith, above love, and above hope in the mercy of God; when as it is evident, the things last mentioned, are the things of the first rate, the weightier matters; Matt. xxiii. 17.

Again, Thou hast preferred the gold above the temple that sanctifieth the gold; and the gift above the altar that sanctifieth the gift; Matt. xxiii. 17.

I say again, What kind of righteousness shall this be called? What back will such a suit of apparel fit, that is set together to what it should be? Nor can other righteousness proceed, where a wrong judgment precedeth it.

This misplacing of God's laws cannot, I say, but produce misplaced obedience. It indeed produceth a monster, an ill-shaped thing, unclean, and an abomination to the Lord. For "see," saith he (if thou wilt be making), "that thou make all things according to the pattern shewn thee in the mount." Set faith, where faith should stand; a moral, where a moral should stand; and a ceremony, where a ceremony should stand: for this turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay. And wilt thou call this thy righteousness? yea, wilt thou stand in this? wilt thou plead for this? and venture an eternal concern in such a piece of linsey-woolsey as this? O fools, and blind!

But, further, let us come a little closer to the point. O blind Pharisee, thou standest to thy righteousness: what dost thou mean? Wouldst thou have mercy for thy righteousness, or justice for thy righteousness.

If mercy, what mercy? Temporal things God giveth to the unthankful and unholy: nor doth he use to sell the world to man for righteousness. The earth hath he given to the children of men. But this is not the thing: thou wouldst have eternal mercy for thy righteousness; thou wouldst have God think upon what an holy, what a good, what a righteous man thou art and hast been. But Christ died not for the good and righteous, nor did he come to call such to the banquet that grace hath prepared for the world. "I came not,—I am not come (saith Christ) to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance;" Mark ii.; Rom. v. Yet this is thy plea; Lord, God, I am a righteous man; therefore grant me mercy, and a share in thy heavenly kingdom. What else dost thou mean when thou sayst, "God I thank thee, that I am not as other men are?" Why dost thou rejoice, why art thou glad that thou art more righteous (if indeed thou art) than thy neighbour, if it is not because thou thinkest that thou hast got the start of thy neighbour, with reference to mercy; and that by thy righteousness thou hast insinuated thyself into God's affections, and procured an interest in his eternal favour? But,

What, what hast thou done by thy righteousness? I say, What hast thou given to God thereby? And what hath he received of thy hand? Perhaps thou wilt say, righteousness pleaseth God: but I answer no, not thine, with respect to justification from the curse of the law, unless it be as perfect as the justice it is yielded to, and as the law that doth command it. But thine is not such a righteousness: no, thine is speckled, thine is spotted, thine makes thee to look like a speckled bird in his eye-sight.

Thy righteousness has added iniquity, because it has kept thee from a belief of thy need of repentance, and because it has emboldened thee to thrust thyself audaciously into the

presence of God, and made thee even before his holy eyes, which are so pure, that they cannot look on iniquity (Hab. i. 13), to vaunt, boast, and brag of thyself, and of thy tottering, ragged, stinking uncleanness ; for all our righteousnesses are as menstruous rags, because they flow from a thing, a heart, a man, that is unclean. But,

Again, Wouldst thou have mercy for thy righteousness ? For whom wouldst thou have it : for another, or for thyself ? If for another (and it is most proper that a righteous man should intercede for another by his righteousness, rather than for himself), then thou thrustest Christ out of his place and office, and makest thyself to be a saviour in his stead ; for a mediator there is already, even a mediator between God and man, and he is the man Christ Jesus.

But dost thou plead by thy righteousness for mercy for thyself ? Why, in doing so, thou impliest—

1. That thy righteousness can prevail with God more than can thy sins ; I say, that thy righteousness can prevail with God to preserve thee from death more than thy sins can prevail with him to condemn thee to it. And if so, what follows, but that thy righteousness is more, and has been done in a fuller spirit than ever were thy sins ? But thus to insinuate, is to insinuate a lie ; for there is no man but, while he is a sinner, sinneth with a more full spirit than a good man can act righteousness withal.

A sinner, when he sinneth, he doth it with all his heart, and with all his mind, and with all his soul, and with all his strength ; nor hath he in his ordinary course any thing that bindeth. But with a good man it is not so ; all and every whit of himself, neither is, nor can be, in every good duty that he doth. For when he would do good, evil is present with him. And again, "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would ;" Gal. v. 17.

Now, if a good man cannot do good things with that oneness and universalness of mind, as a wicked man doth sin with, then is his sin heavier to weigh him down to hell than is his righteousness to buoy him up to the heavens.

And again, I say, if the righteousness of a good man comes short of his sin, both in number, weight, and measure, as it doth (for a good man shrinks and quakes at the thoughts of God's entering into judgment with him, Psalm cxliii. 2); then is his iniquity more than his righteousness. And I say again, if the sin of one that is truly gracious, and so of one that hath the best of principles, is heavier and mightier to destroy him than is his righteousness to save him, how can it be that the Pharisee, that is not gracious, but a mere carnal man (somewhat reformed and painted over with a few lean and low formalities), should with his empty, partial, hypocritical righteousness counterpoise his great, mighty, and weighty sins, that have cleaved to him in every state and condition of his, to make him odious in the sight of God?

2. Dost thou plead by thy righteousness for mercy for thyself? Why in so doing thou impliest, that mercy thou deservest; and that is next door to, or almost as much as to say, God oweth me what I ask for. The best that can be put upon it is, thou seekest security from the direful curse of God, as it were by the works of the law, Rom. ix. 31-33; and to be sure, betwixt Christ and the law, thou wilt drop into hell. For he that seeks for mercy, as it were, and but as it were, by the works of the law, doth not altogether trust thereto. Nor doth he that seeks for that righteousness that should save him as it were by the works of the law, seek it only wholly and solely at the hands of mercy.

So then, to seek for that that should save thee, neither at the hands of the law, nor at the hands of mercy, is to be sure to seek it where it is not to be found; for there is no medium betwixt the righteousness of the law and the mercy of God. Thou must have it either at the door of the law, or at the door of grace. But sayst thou, I am for having of it at the hands of both. I will trust solely to neither. I love to have two strings to my bow. If one of them, as you think, can help me by itself, my reason tells me that both can help me better. Therefore will I be

righteous and good, and will seek by my goodness to be commended to the mercy of God : for surely he that hath something of his own to ingratiate himself into the favour of his prince withal, shall sooner obtain his mercy and favour, than one that comes to him stripped of all good.

I answer, But there are not two ways to heaven : there is but one new and living way which Christ hath consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say, his flesh ; and besides that one, there is no more ; Heb. x. 19-24. Why then dost thou talk of two strings to thy bow ? What became of him that had, and would have two stools to sit on ? yea, the text says plainly, that therefore they obtained not righteousness, because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. See here, they are disowned by the gospel, because they sought it not by faith, that is, by faith only. Again, the law, and the righteousness thereof, flies from them (nor could they attain it, though they follow after it), because they sought it not by faith.

Mercy then is to be found alone in Jesus Christ. Again, the righteousness of the law is to be obtained only by faith of Jesus Christ ; that is, in the Son of God is the righteousness of the law to be found ; for he, by his obedience to his Father, is become the end of the law for righteousness. And for the sake of his legal righteousness (which is also called the righteousness of God, because it was God in the flesh of the Lord Jesus that did accomplish it), is mercy and grace from God extended to whoever dependeth by faith upon God by this Jesus his righteousness for it. And hence it is, that we so often read, that this Jesus is the way to the Father ; that God, for Christ's sake, forgiveth us ; that by the obedience of one many are made righteous, or justified ; and that through this man is preached to us the forgiveness of sins ; and that by him all that believe are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses.

Now, though I here do make mention of righteousness

and mercy, yet I hold there is but one way, to wit, to eternal life ; which way, as I said, is Jesus Christ ; for he is the new, the only new and living way to the Father of mercies, for mercy to make me capable of abiding with him in the heavens for ever and ever.

But sayst thou, I will be righteous in myself that I may have wherewith to commend me to God, when I go to him for mercy ?

I answer, But thou blind Pharisee, I tell thee thou hast no understanding of God's design by the gospel, which is, not to advance man's righteousness, as thou dreamest, but to advance the righteousness of his Son, and his grace by him. Indeed, if God's design by the gospel was to exalt and advance man's righteousness, then that which thou hast said would be to the purpose ; for what greater dignity can be put upon man's righteousness, than to admit it ?

I say then, for God to admit it, to be an advocate, an intercessor, a mediator ; for all these are they which prevail with God to shew me mercy. But this God never thought of, much less could he thus design by the gospel ; for the text runs flat against it. Not of works, not of works of righteousness, which we have done ; "Not of works, lest any man should boast," saying, Well, I may thank my own good life for mercy. It was partly for the sake of my own good deeds that I obtained mercy to be in heaven and glory. Shall this be the burden of the song of heaven ? or is this that which is composed by that glittering heavenly host, and which we have read of in the holy book of God ? No, no ; that song runs upon other feet—standeth in far better strains, being composed of far higher and truly heavenly matter : for God has "predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved : in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace ;" Eph. i. And it is requisite that the song be framed accord-

ingly ; wherefore he saith, that the heavenly song runs thus—"Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof ; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation ; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests ; and we shall reign on the earth ;" Rev. v. 9, 10.

He saith not that they have redeemed, or helped to redeem and deliver themselves ; but that the Lamb, the Lamb that was slain ; the Lamb only was he that redeemed them. Nor, saith he, that they had made themselves kings and priests unto God to offer any oblation, sacrifice, or offering whatsoever, but that the same Lamb had made them such : for they, as is insinuated by the text, were in, among, one with, and no better than the kindreds, tongues, nations, and people of the earth. Better ! "No, in no wise," saith Paul (Rom. iii. 9) ; therefore their separation from them was of mere mercy, free grace, good will, and distinguishing love ; not for, or because of works of righteousness which any of them have done ; no, they were all alike. But these, because beloved when in their blood (according to Ezek. xvi.), were separated by free grace ; and as another scripture hath it, "redeemed from the earth," and from among men by blood ; Rev. xiv. 3, 4. Wherefore deliverance from the ireful wrath of God must not, neither in whole nor in part, be ascribed to the whole law, or to all the righteousness that comes by it, but to this Lamb of God, Jesus, the Saviour of the world ; for it is he that delivered us from the wrath to come, and that according to God's appointment ; "for God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by (or through) our Lord Jesus Christ ;" 1 Thess. i. 10 ; v. 9. Let every man, therefore, take heed what he doth, and whereon he layeth the stress of his salvation ; "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ ;" 1 Cor. iii. 11.

But dost thou plead still as thou didst before, and wilt thou stand thereto ? Why then, thy design must over-

come God, or God's design must overcome thee. Thy design is to give thy good life, thy good deeds, a part of the glory of thy justification from the curse. And God's design is to throw all thy righteousness out into the street, into the dirt and dunghill, as to that thou art for glory, and for glorying here before God ; yea, thou art sharing in the glory of justification when that alone belongeth to God. And he hath said, " My glory will I not give to another." Thou wilt not trust wholly to God's grace in Christ for justification ; and God will not take thy stinking righteousness in as a partner in thy acquitment from sin, death, wrath, and hell. Now the question is, Who shall prevail ? God, or the Pharisee ? and whose word shall stand ? his, or the Pharisee's ?

Alas ! the Pharisee here must needs come down, for God is greater than all. Also, he hath said, that no flesh shall glory in his presence ; and that he will have mercy, and not sacrifice. And again, that it is not (or shall be) in him that wills, nor in him that runs, but in God that sheweth mercy. What hope, help, stay, or relief, then is there left for the merit-monger ? What twig, or straw, or twined thread, is left to be a stay for his soul ? This besom will sweep away his cobweb : the house that this spider doth so lean upon, will now be overturned, and he in it, to hell-fire ; for nothing less than everlasting damnation is designed by God, and that for this fearful and unbelieving Pharisee : God will prevail against him for ever.

3. But wilt thou yet plead thy righteousness for mercy ? Why, in so doing thou takest away from God the power of giving mercy. For if it be thine as wages, it is no longer his to dispose of at pleasure ; for that which another man oweth me, is in equity not at his, but at my disposal. Did I say that by this thy plea thou takest away from God the power of giving mercy ? I will add, yea, and also of disposing of heaven and life eternal. And then, I pray you, what is left unto God, and what can he call his own ? Not mercy, for that by thy good deeds thou hast purchased : not heaven, for that by thy good deeds thou hast purchased :

not eternal life, for that by thy good deeds thou hast purchased. Thus, Pharisee (O thou self-righteous man), hast thou set up thyself above grace, mercy, heaven, glory ; yea, above even God himself, for the purchaser should in reason be esteemed above the purchase.

Awake, man ! What hast thou done ? Thou hast blasphemed God ; thou has undervalued the glory of his grace ; thou hast, what in thee lieth, opposed the glorious design of heaven ; thou hast sought to make thy filthy rags to share in thy justification.

Now, all these are mighty sins ; these have made thine iniquity infinite. What wilt thou do ? Thou hast created to thyself a world of needless miseries. I call them needless, because thou hadst more than enough before. Thou hast set thyself against God in a way of contending, thou standest upon thy points and pantables ; thou wilt not bate God an ace of what thy righteousness is worth, and wilt also make it worth what thyself shalt list : thou wilt be thine own judge, as to the worth of thy righteousness ; thou wilt neither hear what verdict the word has passed about it, nor wilt thou endure that God should throw it out in the matter of thy justification, but quarrelest with the doctrine of free grace, or else dost wrest it out of its place to serve thy Pharisaical designs ; saying, " God I thank thee, I am not as other men ; " fathering upon thyself, yea, upon God and thyself a stark lie ; for thou art as other men are, though not in this, yet in that ; yea, in a far worse condition than the most of men are. Nor will it help thee anything to attribute this thy goodness to the God of heaven ; for that is but a mere toying ; the truth is, the God that thou intendest is nothing but thy righteousness ; and the grace that thou supposest is nothing but thine own good and honest intentions. So that,

4. In all that thou sayst thou dost but play the downright hypocrite : thou pretendest indeed to mercy, but thou intendest nothing but merit : thou seemest to give the glory to God, but at the same time takest it all to thyself : thou despisest others, and criest up thyself, and in con-

clusion, fatherest all upon God by word, and upon thyself in truth. Nor is there anything more common among this sort of men, than to make God, his grace, and kindness, the stalking-horse to their own praise, saying, "God, I thank thee," when they trust to themselves that they are righteous, and have not need of any repentance ; when the truth is, they are the worst sort of men in the world, because they put themselves into such a state as God hath not put them into, and then impute it to God, saying, God, I thank thee, that thou hast done it ; for what greater sin than to make God a liar, or than to father that upon God which he never meant, intended, or did : and all this under a colour to glorify God, when there is nothing else designed, but to take all glory from him, and to wear it on thine own head as a crown, and a diadem, in the face of the whole world.

A self-righteous man, therefore, can come to God for mercy no otherwise than fawningly : for what need of mercy hath a righteous man ? Let him then talk of mercy, of grace, and goodness, and come in an hundred times with his, "God, I thank thee," in his mouth, all is but words ; there is no sense, nor savour, nor relish, of mercy and favour ; nor doth he in truth, from his very heart, understand the nature of mercy, nor what is an object thereof ; but when he thanks God, he praises himself : when he pleads for mercy, he means his own merit ; and all this is manifest from what doth follow ; for, saith he, I am not as this Publican : thence clearly insinuating, that not the good, but the bad, should be rejected of the God of heaven : that not the bad but the good, not the sinner, but the self-righteous, are the most proper objects of God's favour. The same thing is done by others in this our day : favour, mercy, grace, and, "God, I thank thee," is in their mouths, but their own strength, sufficiency, free-will, and the like, they are the things they mean by all such high and glorious expressions.

But, *secondly*, If thy plea be not for mercy, but for justice, then to speak a little to that. 1. Justice has mea-

sures and rules to go by ; unto which measures and rules, if thou comest not up, justice can do thee no good. Come then, O thou blind Pharisee, let us pass away a few minutes in some discourse about this. Thou demandest justice, because God hath said, that the man that doth these things shall live in and by them. And again, the doers of the law shall be justified, not in a way of mercy, but in a way of justice: "He shall live by them." But what hast thou done, O blind Pharisee ? What hast thou done, that thou art emboldened to venture to stand and fall to the most perfect justice of God ? Hast thou fulfilled the whole law, and not offended in one point ? Hast thou purged thyself from the pollutions and motions of sin that dwell in thy flesh, and work in thy own members ? Is the very being of sin rooted out of thy tabernacle ? And art thou now as perfectly innocent as ever was Jesus Christ ? Hast thou, by suffering the uttermost punishment that justice could justly lay upon thee for thy sins, made fair and full satisfaction to God, according to the tenor of his law, for thy transgressions ? If thou hast done all these things, then thou mayst plead something, and yet but something, for thyself, in a way of justice. Nay, in this I will assert nothing, but will rather inquire: What hast thou gained by all this thy righteousness ? (We will now suppose what must not be granted :) Was not this thy state when thou wast in thy first parents ? Wast thou not innocent, perfectly innocent and righteous ? And if thou shouldst be so now, what hast thou gained thereby ? Suppose that the man that had, forty years ago, forty pounds of his own, and had spent it all since, should yet be able now to shew his forty pounds again ; what has he got thereby, or how much richer is he at last than he was when he first set up for himself ? Nay, doth not the blot of his ill living betwixt his first and his last, lie as a blemish upon him, unless he should redeem himself also, by works of supererogation, from the scandal that justice may lay at his door for that.

But, I say, suppose, O Pharisee, this should be thy case, yet God is not bound to give thee in justice that eternal

life which by his grace he bestoweth upon those that have redemption from sin, by the blood of his Son. In justice, therefore, when all comes to all, thou canst require no more than an endless life in an earthly paradise; for there thou wast set up at first; nor doth it appear from what hath been said, touching all that thou hast done or canst do, that thou deservest a better place.

Did I say, that thou mayst require justly an endless life in an earthly paradise? Why, I must add to that saying this proviso, If thou continuest in the law, and in the righteousness thereof; else not.

But how dost thou know that thou shalt continue therein? Thou hast no promise from God's mouth for that; nor is grace or strength ministered to mankind by the covenant that thou art under. So that still thou standest bound to thy good behaviour; and in the day that thou dost give the first, though ever so little a trip, or stumble in thy obedience, thou forfeitest thine interest in paradise (and in justice), as to any benefit there.

But alas! what need is there that we should thus talk of things, when it is manifest that thou hast sinned, not only before thou wast a Pharisee, but when after the most strictest sect of thy religion thou livest also a Pharisee; yea, and now in the temple, in thy prayer there, thou shewest thyself to be full of ignorance, pride, self-conceit, and horrible arrogancy, and desire of vain glory, &c., which are none of them the seat or fruits of righteousness, but the seat of the devil, and the fruit of his dwelling, even at this time in thy heart.

Could it ever have been imagined, that such audacious impudence could have put itself forth in any mortal man, in his approach unto God by prayer, as has shewed itself in thee? "I am not as other men," sayst thou! But is this the way to go to God in prayer? "The prayer of the upright is God's delight." But the upright man glorifies God's justice, by confessing to God the vileness and pollution of his state and condition: he glorifies God's mercy, by acknowledging, that that, and that only, as communi-

cated of God by Christ to sinners, can save and deliver from the curse of the law.

This, I say, is the sum of the prayer of the just and upright man, Job. i. 8 ; xl. 4 ; Acts xiii. 22 ; Psalm xxxviii. ; li. ; 2 Sam. vi. 21, 22 ; and not as thou most vain-gloriously vauntest with thy, " God, I thank thee, I am not as other men are."

True, when a man is accused by his neighbours, by a brother, by an enemy, and the like, if he be clear (and he may be so, as to what they shall lay to his charge), then let him vindicate, justify, and acquit himself, to the utmost that in justice and truth he can ; for his name, the preservation whereof is more to be chosen than silver and gold ; also his profession, yea, the name of God too, and religion may now lie at stake, by reason of such false accusations, and perhaps can by no means (as to this man) be covered and vindicated from reproach and scandal, but by his justifying of himself. Wherefore, in such a work, a man serveth God, and saves religion from hurt ; yea, as he that is a professor, and has his profession attended with a scandalous life, hurteth religion thereby, so he that has his profession attended with a good life, and shall suffer it notwithstanding to lie under blame by false accusations, when it is in the power of his hand to justify himself, hurteth religion also. But the case of the Pharisee is otherwise. He is not here a-dealing with men, but God ; not seeking to stand clear in the sight of the world, but in the sight of heaven itself ; and that too, not with respect to what men or angels, but with respect to what God and his law could charge him with, and justly lay at his door.

This therefore mainly altereth the case ; for a man here to stand thus upon his point, it is death ; for he affronteth God, he giveth him the lie, he reproveth the law ; and, in sum, accuseth it of bearing false witness against him ; he doth this, I say, even by saying, " God, I thank thee, I am not as other men are ;" for God hath made none of this difference. The law condemneth all man as sinners ; testi- fieth that every imagination of the thought of the heart of

the sons of men is only evil, and that continually ; wherefore they that do as the Pharisee did, to wit, seek to justify themselves before God from the curse of the law by their own good doings, though they also, as the Pharisee did, seem to give God the thanks for all ; yet do most horribly sin, even by their so doing, and shall receive a Pharisee's reward at last. Wherefore, O thou Pharisee, it is a vain thing for thee either to think of, or to ask for, at God's hand, either mercy or justice. Because mercy thou canst not ask for, from sense of want of mercy, because thy righteousness, which is by the law, hath utterly blinded thine eyes ; and complimenting with God doth nothing : and as for justice, that can do thee no good ; but the more just God is, and the more by that he acteth towards thee, the more miserable and fearful will be thy condition, because of the deficiency of thy so much, by thee, esteemed righteousness.

What a deplorable condition then is a poor Pharisee in ! For mercy he cannot pray ; he cannot pray for it with all his heart, for he seeth indeed no need thereof. True, the Pharisee, though he was impudent enough, yet would not take all from God ; he would still count, that there was due to him a tribute of thanks : " God, I thank thee," saith he : but yet not a bit of this for mercy ; but for that he had let him live (for I know not for what he did thank himself), till he had made himself better than other men. But that betterment was a betterment in none other's judgment than that of his own ; and that was none other but such an one as was false. So then the Pharisee is by this time quite out of doors : his righteousness is worth nothing, his prayer is worth nothing, his thanks to God are worth nothing ; for that what he had was scanty and imperfect, and it was his pride that made him offer it to God for acceptance ; nor could his fawning thanksgiving better his case, or make his matter at all good before God.

But I will warrant you, the Pharisee was so far off from thinking thus of himself, and of his righteousness, that he thought of nothing so much as of this, that he was a happy

man : yea, happier by far than other his fellow rationals : yea, he plainly declares it, when he saith, " God, I thank thee, I am not as other men are."

O what a fool's paradise was the heart of the Pharisee now in, while he stood in the temple praying to God ! God, I thank thee, said he ; for I am good and holy ; I am a righteous man ; I have been full of good works ; I am no extortioner, unjust, nor adulterer, nor yet as this wretched Publican. I have kept myself strictly to the rule of mine order, and my order is the most strict of all orders now in being : I fast, I pray, I give tithes of all that I possess. Yea, so forward am I to be a religious man, so ready have I been to listen after my duty, that I have asked both of God and man the ordinances of judgment and justice ; I take delight in approaching to God. What less now can be mine than the heavenly kingdom and glory ?

Now the Pharisee, like Haman, saith in his heart, To whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself ? Where is the man that so pleaseth God, and, consequently, that in equity and reason should be beloved of God like me ? Thus like the prodigal's brother, he pleadeth, saying, " Lo, these many years do I serve thee ; neither transgressed I at any time thy commandments," Luke xv. 29.—O brave Pharisee ! but go on in thine oration—" Nor yet as this Publican."

Poor wretch, quoth the Pharisee to the Publican, What comest thou for ? Dost think that such a sinner as thou art shall be heard of God ? God heareth not sinners ; but if any man be a worshipper of God (as I am, as I thank God I am), him he heareth. Thou, for thy part, hast been a rebel all thy days : I abhor to come nigh thee, or to touch thy garments. Stand by thyself, come not near me, for I am more holy than thou ; Isa. lxv. 5.

Hold, stop there, go no further : fie, Pharisee, fie ! dost thou know before whom thou standest, to whom thou speakest, and of what the matter of thy silly oration is made ? Thou art now before God, thou speakest now to God, and therefore in justice and honesty thou shouldst

make mention of his righteousness, not of thine ; of his righteousness, and of his only.

I am sure Abraham, of whom thou sayst he is thy father, never had the face to do as thou hast done, though, it is to be presumed, he had more cause so to do than thou hast, or canst have. Abraham had whereof to glory, but not before God ; yea, he was called God's friend, and yet would not glory before him ; but humbleth himself, was afraid, and trembled in himself, when he stood before him acknowledging of himself to be but dust and ashes ; Gen. xviii. 27, 30, 22 ; Rom. iv. 1, 2 ; but thou, as thou hadst quite forgot that thou wast framed of that matter, and after the manner of other men, standest and pleadest thy goodness before him. Be ashamed, Pharisee ! dost thou think that God hath eyes of flesh, or that he seeth as man sees ? Are not the secrets of thy heart open unto him ? Thinkest thou with thyself that thou, with a few of thy defiled ways, canst cover thy rotten wall, that thou has daubed with untempered mortar, and so hide the dirt thereof from his eyes ; or that these fine, smooth, and oily words, that come out of thy mouth, will make him forget that thy throat is an open sepulchre, and that thou within art full of dead men's bones, and all uncleanness ? Thy thus cleansing of the outside of the cup and platter, and thy garnishing of the sepulchres of the righteous, is nothing at all in God's eyes, but things that manifest that thou art an hypocrite and blind, because thou takest no notice of that which is within, which yet is that which is most abominable to God. For the fruit, alas ! what is the fruit of the tree, or what are the streams of the fountain ? Thy fountain is defiled ; yea, a defiler, and so that which maketh the whole self, with thy works, unclean in God's sight.

But, Pharisee, how comes it to pass that the poor Publican is now so much a mote in thine eye, that thou canst not forbear, but must accuse him before the judgment-seat of God—for in that thou sayst, that thou art not even as this Publican, thou bringest in an accusation, a charge, a bill, against him ? What has he done ? Has he concealed

any of thy righteousness ? or has he secretly informed against thee, that thou art an hypocrite and superstitious ? I dare say, the poor wretch has neither meddled nor made with thee in these matters.

But what aileth thee, Pharisee ? Doth the poor Publican stand to vex thee ? Doth he touch thee with his dirty garments ? or doth he annoy thee with his stinking breath ? Doth his posture of standing so like a man condemned offend thee ? True, he now standeth with his hand held up at God's bar ; he pleads guilty to all that is laid to his charge.

He cannot strut, vapour, and swagger as thou dost ; but why offended at this ? Oh, but he has been a naughty man, and I have been righteous ! sayst thou. Well, Pharisee, well, his naughtiness shall not be laid to thy charge, if thou hast chosen none of his ways. But since thou wilt yet bear me down that thou art righteous, shew now, even now, while thou standest before God with the Publican, some, though they be but small, yea, though but very small, fruits of thy righteousness. Let the Publican alone, since he is speaking for his life before God. Or, if thou canst not let him alone, yet do not speak against him ; for thy so doing will but prove that thou rememberest the evil that the man has done unto thee ; yea, and that thou bearest him a grudge for it too, and while you stand before God.

But, Pharisee, the righteous man is a merciful man, and while he standeth praying, he forgiveth ; yea, and also crieth to God that he will forgive him too ; Mark xi. 25, 26 ; Acts vii. 60. Hitherto then thou hast shewed none of the fruits of thy righteousness. Pharisee, righteousness would teach thee to love this Publican, but thou shewest that thou hatest him. Love covereth the multitude of sins ; but hatred and unfaithfulness revealeth secrets.

Pharisee, thou shouldst have remembered this thy brother in this his day of adversity, and shouldst have shewed that thou hadst compassion on thy brother in this his deplorable condition ; but thou, like the proud, the cruel, and the arrogant man, hast taken thy neighbour at the advantage,

and that when he is even between the straits, and standing upon the pinnacle of difficulty, betwixt the heavens and the hells, and hast done what thou couldst, what on thy part lay, to thrust him down to the deep, saying, "I am not even as this Publican."

What cruelty can be greater, what rage more furious, and what spite and hatred more damnable and implacable, than to follow, or take a man while he is asking of mercy at God's hands, and to put in a caveat against his obtaining of it, by exclaiming against him that he is a sinner? The master of righteousness doth not so: "Do not think (saith he) that I will accuse you to the Father." The scholars of righteousness do not do so. "But as for me (said David), when they (mine enemies) were sick (and the Publican here was sick of the most malignant disease), my clothing was of sackcloth, I humbled my soul with fasting, and my prayer (to wit, that I made for them) returned into mine own bosom. I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother;" John v. 45; Psalm xxxv. 13, 14.

Pharisee, dost thou see here how contrary thou art to righteous men? Now then, where shall we find out one to parallel thee, but by finding him out that is called "the dragon;" for he it is that accuseth the poor sinners before God? Zech. iii.; Rev. xii.

"I am not as this Publican." Modesty should have commanded thee to have bit thy tongue as to this. What could the angels think, but that revenge was now in thine heart, and but that thou comest up into the temple rather to boast of thyself and accuse thy neighbour, than to pray to the God of heaven; for what petition is there in all thy prayer, that gives the least intimation that thou hast the knowledge of God or thyself? Nay, what petition of any kind is there in thy vain-glorious oration from first to last? Only an accusation drawn up, and that against one helpless and forlorn; against a poor man, because he is a sinner; drawn up, I say, against him by thee, who canst not make proof

of thyself that thou art righteous ; but come to proofs of righteousness, and thou art wanting also. What, though thy raiment is better than his, thy skin may be full as black ; yea, what if thy skin be whiter than his, thy heart may be yet far blacker. Yea, it is so, for the truth hath spoken it ; for within, you are full of excess and all uncleanness ; Matt. xxiii.

Pharisee, there are transgressions against the second table, and the Publican shall be guilty of them ; but there are sins also against the first table, and thou thyself art guilty of them.

The Publican, in that he was an extortioner, unjust and an adulterer, made it thereby manifest that he did not love his neighbour ; and thou by making a god, a saviour, a deliverer, of thy filthy righteousness, dost make it appear, that thou dost not love thy God ; for as he that taketh, or that derogateth from his neighbour in that which is his neighbour's due, sinneth against his neighbour ; so he that taketh or derogateth from God, sinneth against God.

Now, then, though thou hast not, as thou dost imagine, played at that low game as to derogate from thy neighbour ; yet thou hast played at that high game as to derogate from thy God ; for thou hast robbed God of the glory of salvation ; yea, declared, that as to that there is no trust to be put in him. "Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength ; but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness ;" Psalm lii. 7.

What else means this great bundle of thy own righteousness, which thou hast brought with thee into the temple ? yea, what means else thy commending of thyself because of that, and so thy implicit prayer, that thou for that mightst find acceptance with God ?

All this, what does it argue, I say, but thy diffidence of God ? and that thou countest salvation safer in thine own righteousness than in the righteousness of God ? and that thy own love to, and care of thy own soul, is far greater, and so much better, than is the care and love of God ? And is this to keep the first table ; yea, the first branch of that

table, which saith, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God?" for thy thus doing cannot stand with love to God?

How can that man say, I love God, who from his very heart shrinketh to trust in him? Or, how can that man say, I would glorify God, who in his very heart refuseth to stand and fall by his mercy?

Suppose a great man should bid all the poor of the parish to his house to dinner, and should moreover send by the mouth of his servant, saying, My lord hath killed his fatlings, hath furnished his table, and prepared his wine, nor is there want of anything; come to the banquet: Would it not be counted as an high affront to, great contempt of, and much distrust in, the goodness of the man of the house, if some of these guests should take with them, out of their own poor store, some of their mouldy crusts, and carry them with them, lay them on their trenchers upon the table before the lord of the feast and the rest of his guests, out of fear that he yet would not provide sufficiently for those he had bidden to the dinner that he had made?

Why, Pharisee, this is the very case; thou hast been called to a banquet, even to the banquet of God's grace, and thou hast been disposed to go; but behold, thou hast not believed that he would of his own cost make thee a feast when thou comest: wherefore of thy own store thou hast brought with thee, and hast laid upon thy trencher on his table thy mouldy crusts in the presence of the angels, and of this poor Publican; yea, and hast vauntingly said upon the whole, "God, I thank thee, I am not as other men are." I am no such needy man; Luke xviii. 11. "I am no extortioner, nor unjust, nor adulterer, nor even as this Publican." I am come indeed to thy feast, for of civility I could do no less; but for thy dainties, I need them not, I have of such things enough of mine own; Luke xviii. 12. I thank thee therefore for thy offer of kindness, but I am not as those that have, and stand in need thereof, "nor yet as this Publican." And thus feeding upon thine own fare, or by making a composition of his and thine together, thou contemnest God, thou countest him insuffi-

cient or unfaithful ; that is, either one that has not enough, or having it, will not bestow it upon the poor and needy ; and, therefore, of mere pretence thou goest to his banquet, but yet trustest to thy own, and to that only.

This is to break the first table ; and so to make thyself a sinner of the highest form : for the sins against the first table are sins of an higher nature than are the sins against the second. True, the sins of the second table are also sins against God, because they are sins against the commandments of God : but the sins that are against the first table, are sins not only against the command, but against the very love, strength, holiness, and faithfulness of God : and herein stands thy condition ; thou hast not, thou sayst, thou hast not done injury to thy neighbour ; but what of that, if thou hast reproached thy maker ?

Pharisee, I will assure thee, thou art beside the saddle ; thy state is not good, thy righteousness is so far off from doing any good, that it maketh thee to be a greater sinner, because it signifieth more immediately against the mercy, the love, the grace, and goodness of God, than the sins of other sinners, as to degree, do.

And as they are more odious and abominable in the sight of God (as they needs must, if what is said be true, as it is), so they are more dangerous to the life and soul of man ; for that they always appear unto him in whom they dwell, and to him that trusteth in them, not to be sins and transgressions, but virtues and excellent things ; not things that set a man further off, but the things that bring a man nearer God, than those that want them are or can be.

This therefore is the dangerous estate of those that go about to establish their own righteousness, that neither have, nor can, while they are so doing, submit themselves to the righteousness of God ; Rom. x. 3. It is far more easy to persuade a poor wretch, whose life is debauched, and sins are written in his forehead, to submit to the righteousness of God (that is, to the righteousness that is of God's providing and giving), than it is to persuade a self-righteous man to do it ; for the profane is sooner convinced

of the necessity of righteousness to save him, as that he has none of his own, and accepteth of, and submitteth himself to the help and salvation that is in the righteousness and obedience of another.

And upon this account it is that Christ saith the publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven before the scribes and Pharisees ; Matt. xxi. 31. Poor Pharisee, what a loss art thou at ? thou art not only a sinner, but a sinner of the highest form. Not a sinner by such sins (by such sins chiefly) as the second table doth make manifest ; but a sinner chiefly in that way as no self-righteous man did ever dream of. For when the righteous man or Pharisee shall hear that he is a sinner, he replieth, "I am not as other men are."

And because the common and more ordinary description of sin is the transgression against the second table, he presently replieth again, "I am not as this Publican is ;" and so shroudeth himself under his own lame endeavours and ragged partial patches of moral or civil righteousness. Wherefore, when he heareth that his righteousness is condemned, slighted, and accounted nothing worth, then he fretteth and fumeth, and would kill the man that so slighteth and disdaineth his goodly righteousness ; but Christ, and the true gospel-teacher still go on, and condemn all his righteousness as menstruous rags, as an abomination to God, and nothing but loss and dung.

Now menstruous rags, things that are an abomination and dung, are not fit matter to make a garment of to wear when I come to God for life, much less to be made my friend, my advocate, my mediator and spokesman, when I stand betwixt heaven and hell ; Isa. lxiv. 6 ; Luke xvi. 15 ; Phil. iii. 6-8, to plead for me that I might be saved.

Perhaps some will blame me, and count me also worthy thereof, because I do not distinguish betwixt the matter and the manner of the Pharisee's righteousness. And let them condemn me still for saving the holy law, which is neither the matter nor manner of the Pharisee's righteousness, but rather the rules (if he will live thereby) up to

which he should completely come in every thing that he doth. And I say again, that the whole of the Pharisee's righteousness is sinful, though not with and to men, yet with and before the God of heaven. Sinful, I say it is, and abominable, both in itself, and also in its effects.

1. In itself ; for that it is imperfect, scanty, and short of the rule by which righteousness is enjoined, and even with which every act should be ; for shortness here, even every shortness in these duties, is sin and sinful weakness ; wherefore the curse taketh hold of the man for coming short ; but that it could not justly do, if his coming short was not his sin : Cursed is every one that doth not, and that continueth not to do all things written in the law ; Deut. xxvii. 26 ; Gal. iii. 10.

2. It is sinful ; because it is wrought by sinful flesh ; for all legal righteousness is a work of the flesh ; Rom. iv. 1, &c. ; Phil. iii. 3-8.

A work, I say, of the flesh ; even of that flesh, who, or which also committeth the greatest enormities ; for the flesh is but one, though its workings are divers : sometimes in a way most notoriously sensual and devilish, causing the soul to wallow in the mire.

But these are not all the works of the flesh ; the flesh sometimes will attempt to be righteous, and set upon doing actions that in their perfection would be very glorious and beautiful to behold. But because the law is only commanding words, and yieldeth no help to the man that attempts to perform it ; and because the flesh is weak, and cannot do of itself that, therefore this most glorious work of the flesh faileth.

But, I say, as it is a work of the flesh it cannot be good, forasmuch as the hand that worketh it is defiled with sin ; for in a good man, one spiritually good, that is "in his flesh, there dwells no good thing," but consequently that which is bad ; how then can the flesh of a carnal, graceless man (and such a one is every Pharisee and self-righteous man in the world), produce, though it joineth itself to the law, to the righteous law of God, that which is good in his sight.

If any shall think that I pinch too hard, because I call man's righteousness which is of the law, of the righteous law of God, flesh, let them consider that which follows: to wit, That though man by sin is said "to be dead in sin and trespasses," yet not so dead but that he can act still in his own sphere; that is, to do, and choose to do, either that which by all men is counted base, or that which by some is counted good, though he is not, nor can all the world make him, capable of doing any thing that may please his God.

Man, by nature, as dead as he is, can, and that with the will of his flesh, will his own salvation. Man, by nature, can, and that by the power of the flesh, pursue and follow after his own salvation; but then he wills it, and pursues or follows after it, not in God's way, but his own; not by faith in Christ, but by the law of Moses. See Rom. ix. 16, 31; x. 3, 7.

Wherefore it is no error to say, that a man naturally has will, and a power to pursue his will, and that as to his own salvation. But it is a damnable error to say, that he hath will and power to pursue it, and that in God's way: for then we must hold that the mysteries of the gospel are natural; for that natural men, or men by nature, may apprehend and know them, yea, and know them to be the only means by which they must obtain eternal life; for the understanding must act before the will; yea, a man must approve of the way to life by Jesus Christ, before his mind will budge, or stir, or move, that way: "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God (of the gospel); for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

He receiveth not these things; that is, his mind and will lie cross unto them, for he counts them foolishness; nor can all the natural wisdom in the world cause that his will should fall in with them, because it cannot discern them.

Nature discerneth the law, and the righteousness thereof; yea, it discerneth it, and approveth thereof; that is, that

the righteousness of it is the best and only way to life, and therefore the natural will and power of the flesh, as here you see in the Pharisee, do steer their course by that to eternal life; 1 Cor. ii. 14.

The righteousness of the law, therefore, is a work of the flesh, a work of sinful flesh, and therefore must needs be as filth, and dung, and abominable as to that for which this man hath produced it and presented it in the temple before God.

Nor is the Pharisee alone entangled in this mischief; many souls are by these works of the flesh flattered, as also the Pharisee was, into an opinion, that their state is good, when there is nothing in it. The most that their conversion amounteth to is, the Publican is become a Pharisee; the open sinner is become a self-righteous man. Of the black side of the flesh he hath had enough, now therefore with the white side of the flesh he will recreate himself. And now, most wicked must he needs be that questioneth the goodness of the state of such a man. He, of a drunkard, a swearer, an unclean person, a Sabbath-breaker, a liar, and the like, is become reformed, a lover of righteousness, a strict observer, doer, and trader in the formalities of the law, and a herder with men of his complexion. And now he is become a great exclainer against sin and sinners, denying to be acquaint with those that once were his companions, saying, "I am not even as this Publican."

To turn therefore from sin to man's righteousness, yea, to rejoice in confidence, that thy state is better than is that of the Publican (I mean, better in the eyes of divine justice, and in the judgment of the law); and yet to be found by the law, not in the spirit, but in the flesh; not in Christ, but under the law; not in a state of salvation, but of damnation, is common among men: for they, and they only, are the right men, "who worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." Where, by "flesh," must not be meant the horrible transgressions against the law (though

they are also called "the works of the flesh," Gal. iv. 29) ; for they minister no occasion unto men to have confidence in them towards God : but that is that which is insinuated by Paul, where he saith, he had no "confidence in the flesh," though he might have had it ; as he said, "though I might also have confidence in the flesh." "If any other man," saith he, "thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more," Phil. iii. 3, 4 ; and then he repeats a twofold privilege that he had by the flesh.

1. That he was one of the seed of Abraham, and of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews, &c.

2. That he had fallen in with the strictest men of that religion, which was such after the flesh, to wit, to be a Pharisee, and was the son of a Pharisee, had much fleshly zeal for God, and "touching the righteousness which is of the law, blameless," Phil. iii. 3, 5, 6.

But I say still, there is nothing but flesh ; fleshly privileges and fleshly righteousness, and so, consequently, a fleshly confidence, and trust for heaven. This is manifest ; when the man had his eyes enlightened, he counted all loss and dung that he might be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.

And this leads me to another thing, and that is, to tell thee, O thou blind Pharisee, that thou canst not be in a safe condition, because thou hast thy confidence in the flesh, that is, in the righteousness of the flesh. "For all flesh is grass, and all the glory of it as the flower of the field ;" and the flesh, and the glory of that being as weak as the grass, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, is but a weak business for a man to venture his eternal salvation upon. Wherefore, as I also hinted before, the godly-wise have been afraid to be found in their righteousness, I mean their own personal righteousness, though that is far better than can be the righteousness of any carnal man : for the godly man's righteousness is wrought by the Spirit and faith of Christ, but the ungodly man's

righteousness is of the flesh, and of the law. Yet I say, this godly man is afraid to stand by his righteousness before the tribunal of God, as is manifest in these following particulars.

1. He sees sin in his righteousness ; for so the prophet intimates, when he saith, "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isa. lxiv.); but there is nothing can make one's righteousness filthy but sin. It is not the poor, the low, the mean, the sickly, the beggarly state of man, nor yet his being hated of devils, persecuted of men, broken under necessities, reproaches, distresses, or any kind of troubles of this nature that can make the godly man's righteousness filthy ; nothing but sin can do it, and that can, doth, hath, and will do it. Nor can any man, be he who he will, and though he watches, prays, strives, denies himself, and puts his body under what chastisement or hardships he can ; yea, though he also get his spirit and soul hoisted up to the highest peg or pin of sanctity and holy contemplation, and so his lusts to the greatest degree of mortification ; but sin will be with him in the best of his performances : with him, I say, to pollute and defile his duties, and to make his righteousness speckled and spotted, filthy and menstruous.

I will give you two or three instances for this.

(1.) Nehemiah was a man (in his day), one that was zealous, very zealous, for God, for his house, for his people, and for his ways ; and so continued, and that from first to last, as they may see that please to read the relation of his actions ; yet when he comes seriously to be concerned with God about his duties, he relinquisheth a standing by them. True, he mentioneth them to God, but confesseth that there are imperfections in them, and prayeth that God will not wipe them away. "Wipe not out my good deeds, O my God, that I have done for the house of my God, and for the offices thereof." And again, "Remember me, O my God, concerning this also (another good deed), and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy ; and remember me, O my God, for good ;" Neh. xiii.

I do not think that by these prayers he pleadeth for an

acceptance of his person, as touching justification from the curse of the law (as the poor blind Pharisee doth), but that God would accept of his service, as he was a son, and not deny to give him a reward of grace for what he had done, since he was pleased to declare in his testament, that he would reward the labour of love of his saints with an exceeding weight of glory ; and therefore prayeth, that God would not wipe away his good deeds, but remember him for good, according to the greatness of his mercy.

(2.) A second instance is that of David, where he saith, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord ; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified ;" Psalm clxiii. 2. David, as I have hinted before, is said to be a man "after God's own heart," Acts xiii. ; and as here by the Spirit he acknowledges him for his servant ; yet behold how he shrinketh, how he draweth back, how he prayeth, and petitioneth, that God would vouchsafe so much as not to enter into judgment with him. Lord, saith he, if thou enterest into judgment with me, I die, because I shall be condemned ; for in thy sight I cannot be justified ; to wit, by my own good deeds. Lord, at the beginning of thy dealing with me, by the law and my works, I die : therefore do not so much as enter into judgment with me, O Lord. Nor is this my case only, but it is the condition of all the world : "For in thy sight shall no man living be justified."

(3.) A third instance is that general conclusion of the apostle, "But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident ; for the just shall live by faith." By this saying of St Paul, as he taketh up the sentence of the prophet Habakkuk, chap. ii. 4, so he taketh up this sentence, yea, and the personal justice of David also. No man, saith he, is justified by the law in the sight of God : no, no just man, no holy man, not the strictest and most righteous man. But why not ? Why, because "the just shall live by faith."

The just man, therefore, must die, if he has not faith in another righteousness than that which is of the law, called his own : I say, he must die, if he has none other right-

eousness than that which is his own by the law. Thus also Paul confesses of himself : " I (saith he) know nothing by myself," either before conversion or after ; that is, I knew not that I did any thing before conversion, either against the law, or against my conscience ; for I was then, touching the righteousness which is of the law, blameless. Also, since my conversion, I know nothing by myself ; for " I have walked in all good conscience before God unto this day."

A great saying, I promise you. Well, but yet " I am not hereby justified;" Phil. iii. 7; Acts xxiii. 1; 1 Cor. iv. 4. Nor will I dare to venture the eternal salvation of my soul upon mine own justice ; " for he that judgeth me is the Lord ;" that is, though I, through my dim-sightedness, cannot see the imperfections of my righteousness, yet the Lord, who is my judge, and before whose tribunal I must shortly stand, can and will ; and if in his sight there shall be found no more but one spot in my righteousness, I must, if I plead my righteousness, fall for that.

2. That the best of men are afraid to stand before God's tribunal, there to be judged by the law as to life and death, according to the sufficiency or non-sufficiency of their righteousness, is evident ; because by casting away their own (in this matter), they make all the means they can for this ; that is, that his mercy, by an act of grace, be made over to them, and that they in it may stand before God to be judged.

Hence David cries out so often, " Lead me in thy righteousness." " Deliver me in thy righteousness." " Judge me according to thy righteousness." " Quicken me in thy righteousness." " O Lord (says he), give ear to my supplications : in thy faithfulness answer me, and in thy righteousness." " And enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord : for in thy sight shall no flesh living be justified." And David, what if God doth thus ? Why, then, saith he, " My tongue shall speak of his righteousness." " My tongue shall sing of thy righteousness." " My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness." " Yea, I will

make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only ;” Psalm lviii. ; xxxi. 1 ; xxxv. 24 ; cxix. 40 ; xxxv. 28 ; li. 14 ; lxxi. 15, 16.

Daniel also, when he comes to plead for himself and his people, he first casts away his and their righteousness, saying, “ For we do not present our supplications unto thee for our righteousness :” And he pleads God’s righteousness, and that he might have a share and interest in that saying, “ O Lord, righteousness belongeth to thee ;” to wit, that righteousness, for the sake of which, mercy and forgiveness, and so heaven and happiness, is extended to us.

Righteousness belongeth to thee, and is thine, as nearly as sin, shame, and confusion, are ours, and belongeth to us. Read the 16th and 17th verses of the 9th of Daniel. “ O Lord (saith he), according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger, and thy fury, be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain ; because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem, and thy people, are become a reproach to all that are about us. Now, therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord’s sake :” For the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ ; for on him Daniel now had his eye, and through him to the Father he made his supplication ; yea, and the answer was according to his prayer, to wit, that God would have mercy on Jerusalem ; and that he would in his time send the Lord, the Messias, to bring them in everlasting righteousness for them.

Paul also, as I have hinted before, disclaims his own righteousness, and layeth fast hold on the righteousness of God ; seeking to be found in that, not having his own righteousness, for he knew that when the rain descends, the winds blow, and the floods come down on all men, they that have but their own righteousness, must fall ; Phil. iii.

Now, the earnest desire of the righteous to be found in God’s righteousness, ariseth from strong conviction of the imperfections of their own, and the knowledge that was given them of the terror that will attend men at the day of

the fiery trial ; to wit, the day of judgment. For although men can now flatter themselves into a fool's paradise, and persuade themselves that all shall be well with them then, for the sake of their own silly and vain-glorious performances, yet when the day comes that shall burn like an oven, and when all that have done wickedly shall be as stubble (and so will all appear to be that are not found in Christ), then will their righteousness vanish like smoke, or be like fuel for that burning flame. And hence the righteousness that the godly seek to be found in, is called, The name of the Lord, a strong tower, a rock, a shield, a fortress, a buckler, a rock of defence, unto which they resort, and into which they run and are safe.

The godly therefore do not, as this Pharisee, bring their own righteousness into the temple, and there buoy up themselves and spirits by that into a conceit, that for the sake of that God will be merciful and good unto them ; but throwing away their own, they make to God for his, because they certainly know, even by the word of God, that in the judgment none can stand the trial but those that are found in the righteousness of God.

3. That the best of men are afraid to stand before God's tribunal by the law, there to be judged to life and death, according to the sufficiency or non-sufficiency of their righteousness, is evident ; for they know, that it is a vain thing to seek, by acts of righteousness, to make themselves righteous men, as is the way of all them that seek to be justified by the deeds of the law.

And herein lieth the great difference between the Pharisee and the true Christian man. The Pharisee thinks, by acts of righteousness, he shall make himself a righteous man : therefore he cometh into the presence of God well furnished, as he thinks, with his negative and positive righteousness.

Grace suffereth not a man to boast before God, whatever he saith before men. His soul that is lifted up, is not upright in him ; and better is the poor in spirit than the proud in spirit. The Pharisee was a very proud man ; a

proud, ignorant man ; proud of his own righteousness, and ignorant of God's : for had he not, he could not, as he did, have so condemned the Publican, and justified himself.

And I say again, that all this pride and vain-glorious show of the Pharisee did arise from his not being acquainted with this, that a man must be good before he can do good ; he must be righteous, before he can do righteousness. This is evident from Paul, who insinuateth this as the reason why none do good, even because " There is none that is righteous, no, not one." " There is none righteous," saith he, and then follows, " There is none that doeth good ;" Rom. iii. 10, 11, 12. For it is not possible for a man that is not first made righteous by the God of heaven, to do any thing that in a gospel-sense may be called righteousness. To make himself a righteous man, by his so meddling with them, he may design ; but work righteousness, and so by such works of righteousness make himself a righteous man, he cannot.

The righteousness of a carnal man is indeed by God called righteousness ; but it must be understood as spoken in the dialect of the world. The world indeed calls it righteousness, and it will do no harm, if it bear that term with reference to worldly matters. Hence worldly civilians are called good and righteous men, and so, such as Christ, under that notion, neither died for, nor giveth his grace unto ; Rom. v. 7, 8. But we are not now discoursing about any other righteousness, than that which is so accounted either in a law or in a gospel-sense ; and therefore let us a little more touch upon that.

A man then must be righteous in a law-sense, before he can do acts of righteousness, I mean, that are such in a gospel-sense. Hence, first, you have true gospel-righteousness made the fruit of a second birth. " If ye know that Christ is righteous, know ye that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him ;" 1 John ii. 29. Not born of him by virtue of his own righteous actions, but born of him by virtue of Christ's mighty working with his work upon

the soul, who afterwards, from a principle of life, acteth and worketh righteousness.

And he saith again, " Little children, let no man deceive you : he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous." Upon this scripture I will a little comment, for the proof of what is urged before : namely, that a man must be righteous in a law-sense, before he can do such things that may be called acts of righteousness in a gospel-sense. And for this, this scripture, 1 John iii. 7, ministereth to us two things to be considered by us.

The first is, That he that doth righteousness is righteous.

The second is, That he that doth righteousness is righteous, as Christ is righteous.

First, He that doth righteousness ; that is, righteousness which the gospel calleth so, is righteous ; that is, precedent to, or before he doth that righteousness. For he doth not say, he shall make his person righteous by acts of righteousness that he shall do ; for then an evil tree may bear good fruit, yea, and may make itself good by doing so ; but he saith, He that doth righteousness is righteous ; as he saith, He that doth righteousness is born of him.

So then, a man must be righteous before he can do righteousness, before he can do righteousness in a gospel-sense.

Our second thing then is to inquire, with what righteousness a man must be righteous, before he can do that which in a gospel-sense is called righteousness.

And, first, I answer, He must be righteous in a law-sense : that is, he must be righteous in the judgment of the law. This is evident : because he saith, " He that doeth righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous." That is, in a law-sense : for Christ in no sense is righteous in the judgment of charity only ; but in his meanest acts, if it be lawful to make such comparison, he was righteous in a law-sense, or in the judgment of the law. Now the apostle saith, that " He that doeth righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous." They are the words of God, and therefore I cannot

err in quoting of them, though I may not so fully as I would make the glory of them shine in speaking to them.

But what righteousness is that, with which a man must stand righteous in the judgment of the law, before he shall or can be found to do acts of righteousness, that by the gospel are so called ?

1. I answer, first, It is none of his own which is of the law, you may be sure: for he hath his righteousness before he doth any that can be called his own. "He that doeth righteousness is righteous" already, precedent to, or before he doth that righteousness; yea, he "is righteous, even as he is righteous."

2. It cannot be his own which is of the gospel; that is, that which floweth from a principle of grace in the soul: for he is righteous before he doth this righteousness. "He that doeth righteousness is righteous." He doth not say, he that hath done it, but he that doth it; respecting the act while it is in doing, he is righteous. He is righteous even then when he is a-doing of the very first act of righteousness; but an act, while it is doing, cannot, until it is done, be called an act of righteousness; yet, saith the text, "he is righteous."

But again, if an act, while it is doing, cannot be called an act of righteousness, to be sure, it cannot have such influences as to make the actor righteous—to make him righteous, as the Son of God is righteous; and yet the righteousness with which this doer is made righteous, and that before he doth righteousness, is such; for so saith the text, that makes him righteous, as he is righteous.

Besides, it cannot be his own, which is gospel-righteousness, flowing from a principle of grace in the soul; for that in its greatest perfection in us, while we live in this world, is accompanied with some imperfections; to wit, our faith, love, and whole course of holiness is wanting, or hath something lacking in it. They neither are apart, nor when put all together, perfect, as to the degree, the uttermost degree of perfection.

But the righteousness under consideration, with which

the man, in that of John, is made righteous, is a perfect righteousness ; not only with respect to the nature of it, as a penny is as perfect silver as a shilling ; nor yet with respect to a comparative degree, for so a shilling arriveth more toward the perfection of the number twenty, than doth a twopenny or a threepenny piece ; but it is a righteousness so perfect, that nothing can be added to, nor can any thing be taken from it ; for so implieth the words of the text, he is righteous as Christ is righteous ; yea, thus righteous before, and in order to his doing of righteousness.

And in this he is like unto the Son of God, who was also righteous before he did acts of righteousness referring to a law of commandment ; wherefore it is said, that as he is, so are we in this world. As he is or was righteous, before he did acts of righteousness among men by a law ; so are his righteous, before they act righteousness among men by a law. "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous."

Christ was righteous before he did righteousness, with a twofold righteousness. He had a righteousness as he was God ; his Godhead was perfectly righteous : yea, it was righteousness itself. His human nature was perfectly righteous, it was naturally spotless and undefiled. Thus his person was righteous, and so qualified to do that righteousness, that because he was born of woman, and made under the law, he was bound by the law to perform.

Now, as he is, so are we ; not by way of natural righteousness, but by way of resemblance thereunto. Had Christ, in order to his working of righteousness, a twofold righteousness inherent in himself?—the Christian, in order to his working of righteousness, had belonging to him a twofold righteousness. Did Christ's twofold righteousness qualify him for that work of righteousness that was of God designed for him to do ?—why, the Christian's twofold righteousness doth qualify him for that work of righteousness that God hath ordained that he should do and walk in this world.

But you may ask, What is that righteousness with

which a Christian is made righteous before he doth righteousness ?

I answer, It is a twofold righteousness.

1. It is a righteousness put upon him.

2. It is a righteousness put into him.

For the first, It is a righteousness put upon him, with which also he is clothed as with a coat or mantle, Rom. iii. 22, and this is called "the robe of righteousness;" and this is called "the garment of salvation;" Isa. lxi. 10.

This righteousness is none other but the obedience of Christ; the which he performed in the days of his flesh, and can properly be called no man's righteousness, but the righteousness of Christ; because no man had a hand therein, but he completed it himself. And hence it is said, that "by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous;" Rom. v. 19. By the obedience of one, of one man Jesus Christ (as you have it in verse 15); for he came down into the world, to this very end; that is, to make a generation righteous, not by making of them laws, and prescribing unto them rules (for this was the work of Moses, who said, "And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as he hath commanded us;" Deut. vi. 25; xxiv. 13); nor yet by taking away by his grace the imperfections of their righteousness, and so making of that perfect by additions of his own; but he makes them righteous by his obedience, not in them, but for them, while he personally subjected himself to his Father's law on our behalf, that he might have a righteousness to bestow upon us. And hence we are said to be made righteous, while we work not; and to be justified, while ungodly (Rom. iv. 5), which can be done by no other righteousness than that which is the righteousness of Christ by performance, the righteousness of God by donation, and our righteousness by imputation. For, I say, the person that wrought this righteousness for us, is Jesus Christ; the person that giveth it to us, is the Father; who hath made Christ to be unto us righteousness, and hath given him to us for this very end, that we might be

made the righteousness of God in him; 1 Cor. i. 4; 2 Cor. v. 21. And hence it is often said, "One shall say, Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength." And again, "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." "This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord; and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord;" Isa. xlv. 24, 25; liv. 17.

This righteousness is that which justifieth, and which secureth the soul from the curse of the law; by hiding, through its perfection, all the sins and imperfections of the soul. Hence it follows, "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin;" Rom. iv.

And this it doth, even while the person, that by grace is made a partaker, is without good works, and so ungodly. This is the righteousness of Christ, Christ's personal performances, which he did when he was in this world; that is that by which the soul, while naked, is covered, and so hid as to its nakedness, from the divine sentence of the law: "I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness," Ezek. xvi. 4-9.

Now this obediential righteousness of Christ consisteth of two parts. 1. In a doing of that which the law commanded us to do. 2. In a paying that price for the transgression thereof, which justice hath said shall be required at the hand of man; and that is the cursed death. "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die the death;" to wit, the death that comes by the curse of the law. So then, Christ having brought in that part of obedience for us, which consisteth in a doing of such obediential acts of righteousness which the law commands, he adds thereto the spilling of his blood, to be the price of our redemption from that cursed death, that by sin we had brought upon our bodies and souls. And thus are the Christians perfectly righteous; they have the whole obe-

dience of Christ made over to them; to wit, that obedience that standeth in doing the law, and that obedience that standeth in paying of a price for our transgressions. So, then, doth the law call for righteousness? Here it is. Doth the law call for satisfaction for our sins? Here it is. And what can the law say any more to the sinner but that which is good, when he findeth in the personal obedience of Christ for him, that which answereth to what it can command, that which it can demand of us?

Herein, then, standeth a Christian's safety, not in a bundle of actions of his own, but in a righteousness which cometh to him by grace and gift; for this righteousness is such as comes by gift, by the gift of God. Hence it is called the gift of righteousness, the gift by grace, the gift of righteousness by grace, which is the righteousness of one, to wit, the obedience of Jesus Christ, Rom. v. 15-19.

And this is the righteousness by which he that doth righteousness is righteous as he is righteous; because it is the very self-same righteousness that the Son of God hath accomplished by himself. Nor has he any other or more excellent righteousness, of which the law taketh notice, or that it requireth, than this: for as for the righteousness of his Godhead, the law is not concerned with that; for as he is such, the law is his creature, and servant, and may not meddle with him.

The righteousness also of his human nature, the law hath nothing to do with that; for that is the workmanship of God, and is as good, as pure, as holy, and undefiled, as is the law itself. All then that the law hath to do with, is to exact complete obedience of him that is made under it, and a due satisfaction for the breach thereof; the which, if it hath, then Moses is content.

Now, this is the righteousness with which the Christian, as to justification, is made righteous; to wit, a righteousness that is neither essential to his Godhead, nor to his manhood; but such as standeth in that glorious person (who was such) his obedience to the law. Which right-

eousness himself had, with reference to himself, no need of at all, for his Godhead, yea, his manhood, was perfectly righteous without it. This righteousness therefore was there, and there only necessary, where Christ was considered as God's servant (and our surety) to bring to God Jacob again, and to restore the preserved of Israel. For though Christ was a Son, yet he became a servant to do, not for himself, for he had no need, but for us, the whole law, and so bring in everlasting righteousness for us.

And hence it is said, that Christ did what he did for us. He became the end of the law for righteousness for us; he suffered for us, he died for us, he laid down his life for us, and he gave himself for us. The righteousness then that Christ did fulfil, when he was in the world, was not for himself simply considered, nor for himself personally considered, for he had no need thereof; but it was for the elect, the members of his body.

Christ then did not fulfil the law for himself, for he had no need thereof. Christ again did fulfil the law for himself, for he had need of the righteousness thereof; he had need thereof for the covering of his body, and the several members thereof; for they, in a good sense, are himself, members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones; and he owns them as parts of himself in many places of the holy scriptures; Eph. v. 30; Acts ix. 4, 5; Matt. xxv. 45; x. 40; Mark ix. 37; Luke x. 16; 1 Cor. xii. 12, 27. This righteousness then, even the whole of what Christ did in answer to the law, it was for his; and God hath put it upon them, and they were righteous in it, even righteous as he is righteous. And this they have before they do acts of righteousness.

Secondly, There is righteousness put into them, before they act righteous things. A righteousness, I say, put into them; or I had rather that you should call it a principle of righteousness; for it is a principle of life to righteousness. Before man's conversion, there is in him a principle of death to sin; but when he is converted to Christ, there is put in

him a principle of righteousness, that he may bring forth fruit unto God ; Rom. vii. 4-6.

Hence they are said to be quickened, to be made alive, to be risen from death to life, to have the Spirit of God dwelling in them ; not only to make their souls alive, but to quicken their mortal bodies to that which is good ; Rom. viii. 11.

Here, as I hinted before, they that do righteousness are said to be born of him, that is, antecedent to their doing of righteousness, 1 John ii. 29 ; " born of him," that is, made alive with new, spiritual, and heavenly life. Wherefore the exhortation to them is, " Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin ; but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God ;" Rom. vi. 13.

Now this principle must also be in men, before they can do that which is spiritual : for whatever seeming good thing any man doth, before he has bestowed upon him this heavenly principle from God, it is accounted nothing, it is accounted sin and abomination in the sight of God ; for an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit : " Men do not gather grapes of thorns ; neither of a bramble gather figs." It is not the fruit that makes the tree, but the tree that makes the fruit. A man must be good, before he can do good ; and evil before he can do evil.

This is that which is asserted by the Son of God himself ; and it lieth so level with reason and the nature of things, that it cannot be contradicted : Matth. vii. 16-18 ; Luke vi. 43-45. " A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is good : and an evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is evil." But notwithstanding all that can be said, it seemeth very strange to the carnal world ; for they will not be otherwise persuaded, but that they be good deeds that make good men, and evil ones that make evil men. And so, by such dotish apprehensions, do what in them lieth to fortify their

hearts with the mists of darkness against the clear shining of the word, and conviction of the truth.

And thus it was from the beginning. Abel's first services to God were from this principle of righteousness; but Cain would have been made righteous by his deeds; but his deeds not flowing from the same root of goodness, as did Abel's, notwithstanding he did it with the very best he had, is yet called evil: for he wanted, I say, the principles, to wit, of grace and faith, without which no action can be counted good in a gospel-sense.

These two things, then, that man must have that will do righteousness. He must have put upon him the perfect righteousness of Christ: and he must have that dwelling in him, as a fruit of the new birth, a principle of righteousness. Then indeed he is a tree of righteousness, and God is like to be glorified in and by him; but this the Pharisee was utterly ignorant of, and at the remotest distance from.

You may ask me next, But which of these are first bestowed upon the Christian—the perfect righteousness of Christ unto justification, or this gospel-principle of righteousness unto sanctification?

Ans. The perfect righteousness of Christ unto justification must first be made over to him by an act of grace. This is evident,

1. Because he is justified as ungodly; that is, whilst he is ungodly: but it must not be said of them that have this principle of grace in them, that they are ungodly; for they are saints and holy. But this righteousness, by it God justifieth the ungodly, by imputing it to them, when and while they, as to a principle of grace, are graceless.

This is further manifested thus: The person must be accepted before his performance can; "And the Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering;" Gen. iv. If he had respect to Abel's person first, yet he must have respect unto it for the sake of some righteousness; but Abel as yet had no righteousness; for that he acted, after God had a respect

unto his person. "And the Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering : but unto Cain, and to his offering, he had no respect."

The prophet Ezekiel also shews us this, where, by the similitude of the wretched infant, and of the manner of God's receiving it to mercy, he shews how he received the Jews to favour. First, saith he, "I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness." There is justification ; "I covered thy nakedness." But what manner of nakedness was it? Yes, it was then as naked as naked could be, even as naked as in the day that it was born ; Ezek. xvi. 4-9. And as thus naked, it was covered, not with any thing but with the skirt of Christ ; that is, with his robe of righteousness, with his obedience, that he performed of himself for that very purpose ; for by the obedience of one, many are made righteous.

2. Righteousness unto justification must be first ; because the first duty that a Christian performeth to God, must be accepted, not for the sake of the principle from which in the heart it flows, nor yet for the sake of the person that acts it, but for the sake of Christ, whose righteousness it is by which the sinner stands just before God. And hence it is said, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain," Heb. xi. By faith he did it ; but faith in respect to the righteousness that justifies ; for we are justified by faith ; not by faith as it is an acting grace, but the righteousness of faith, that is, by that righteousness that faith embraceth, layeth hold of, and helpeth the soul to rest and trust to, for justification of life, which is the obedience of Christ. Besides, it is said, by faith he offered ; faith then in Christ was precedent to his offering.

Now, since faith was in act before his offer, and since before his offer he had no personal goodness of his own, faith must look out from home ; I say to another for righteousness ; and finding the righteousness of Christ to be the righteousness which by God was designed to be performed for the justification of a sinner, it embraces it, and

through it offereth to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.

Hence it follows, "By which he obtained witness that he was righteous;" by which, not by his offering, but by his faith; for his offering, simply as an offering, could not have made him righteous if he had not been righteous before; for "an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit." Besides, if this be granted, why had not God respect to Cain's offering as well as to Abel's? For did Abel offer? So did Cain. Did Abel offer his best? So did Cain his. And if with this we shall take notice of the order of their offering, Cain seemed to offer first, and so with the frankest will and forwardest mind; but yet, saith the text, "The Lord had respect to Abel and to his offering." But why to Abel? Why, because his person was made righteous before he offered his gift: "By which he obtained witness that he was righteous;" God testifying of his gifts, that they were good and acceptable because they declared Abel's acceptance of the righteousness of Christ, through the riches of the grace of God.

By faith, then, Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. He shrouded himself under the righteousness of Christ, and so, of that righteousness, he offered to God. God also looking and finding him there (where he could not have been, as to his own apprehension, no otherwise than by faith), accepted of his gift; by which acceptance (for so you may understand it also) God testifieth that he was righteous; for God receiveth not the gifts and offerings of those that are not righteous, for their sacrifices are an abomination unto him, Prov. xxi. 27.

Abel then was, I say, made righteous, first, as he stood ungodly in himself; God justifieth the ungodly, Rom. iv. Now, being justified, he was righteous; and being righteous, he offered his sacrifice of praise to God, or other offerings which God accepted, because he believed in his Son. But this our Pharisee understandeth not.

3. Righteousness by imputation must be first, because we are made so, to wit, by another—"By the obedience of

one shall many be made righteous." Now to be made righteous, implies a passiveness in him that is so made, and the activity of the work to lie in some body else ; except he had said, they had made themselves righteous ; but that it doth not, nor doth the text leave to any the least countenance so to insinuate ; nay, it plainly affirms the contrary, for it saith, by the obedience of one, of one man, Jesus Christ, many are made righteous ; by the righteousness of one, Rom. v. So then, if they be made righteous by the righteousness of one ; I say if many be made righteous by the righteousness of one, then are they that are so, as to themselves, passive and not active, with reference to the working out of this righteousness. They have no hand in that ; for that is the act of one, the righteousness of one, the obedience of one, the workmanship of one, even of Christ Jesus.

Again, If they are made righteous by this righteousness, then also they are passive as to their first privilege by it ; for they are made righteous by it ; they do not make themselves righteous by it.

Imputation is also the act of God. " Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness." The righteousness then is a work of Christ, his own obedience to his Father's law ; the making of it ours is the act of the Father, and of his infinite grace : " For of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness." " For God hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." And both these things God shewed to our first parents, when he acted in grace towards them after the fall.

There it is said, the Lord God made unto Adam, and unto his wife, coats of skins, and clothed them ; Gen. iii. 21.

Whence note,

(1.) That Adam and his wife were naked, both in God's eye and in their own, verses 10, 11.

(2.) That the Lord God made coats of skins.

(3.) That in his making of them, he had respect to Adam and to his wife, that is, he made them.

(4.) That when he had made them, he also clothed them therewith.

They made not the coats, nor did God bid them make them ; but God did make them himself to cover their nakedness with. Yea, when he had made them, he did not bid them put them on, but he himself did clothe them with them : for thus runs the text ; “ Unto Adam also, and to his wife, did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them.” O ! it was the Lord God that made this coat with which a poor sinner is made righteous ! And it is also the Lord God that putteth it upon us. But this our Pharisee understandeth not.

But now, if a man is not righteous before he is made so, before the Lord God has by the righteousness of another made him so ; then whether this righteousness comes first or last, the man is not righteous until it cometh ; and if he be not righteous until it cometh, then what works soever are done before it comes, they are not the works of a righteous man, nor the fruits of a good tree, but of a bad. And so again, this righteousness must first come before a man be righteous, and before a man does righteousness. Make the tree good, and its fruit will be good.

Now, since a man must be made righteous before he can do righteousness, it is manifest his works of righteousness do not make him righteous, no more than the fig makes its own tree a fig-tree, or than the grape doth make its own vine a vine. Hence those acts of righteousness that Christian men do perform, are called the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God ; Phil. i. 11.

The fruits of righteousness they are by Jesus Christ, as the fruits of the tree are by the tree itself ; for the truth is, that principle of righteousness, of which mention has been made before, and concerning which I have said it comes in in the second place ; it is also originally to be found for us nowhere but in Christ.

Hence it is said to be by Jesus Christ ; and again, “ Of his fulness have we all received, and grace for grace ;” John i. 16. A man must then be united to Christ first, and so being united, he partaketh of this benefit, to wit, a principle that is supernatural, spiritual, and heavenly. Now, his being united to Christ, is not of or from himself, but of and from the Father, who, as to this work, is the husbandman ; even as the twig that is grafted into the tree officiateth not, that is, grafteth not itself thereunto, but is grafted in by some other, itself being utterly passive as to that. Now, being united unto Christ, the soul is first made partaker of justification, or of justifying righteousness, and now no longer beareth the name of an ungodly man ; for he is made righteous by the obedience of Christ ; he being also united to Christ, partaketh of the root and fatness of Christ ; the root, that is, his divine nature ; the fatness, that is, the fulness of grace that is laid up in him to be communicated unto us, even as the branch that is grafted into the olive-tree partaketh of the root and fatness of the olive-tree. Now partaking thereof, it quickeneth, it groweth, it bud-deth, and yieldeth fruit to the praise and glory of God ; Rom. xi. 17.

But these things, as I have often said, the poor Pharisee was ignorant of, when so swaggeringly he, with his “ God, I thank thee,” came into the temple to pray. And, indeed, in that which hath been said is something of the mystery of God’s will in his way with his elect ; and such a mystery it is, that it lieth hid for ever to nature and natural men ; for they think of nothing less than of this, nor of nothing more, when they think of their souls and of salvation, than that something must be done by themselves to reconcile them to God. Yea, if through some common convictions their understandings should be swayed to a consenting to that, that justification is of grace by Christ, and not of works by men ; yet conscience, reason, and the law of nature, not being as yet subdued by the power and glory of grace unto the obedience of Christ, will rise up in rebellion

against this doctrine, and will over-rule and bow down the soul again to the law and works thereof, for life.

4. Righteousness by imputation must be first, because, else faith, which is a part, yea, a greater part of that which is called a principle of grace in the soul, will have nothing to fix itself upon, nor a motive to work by. Let this therefore be considered by those that are on the contrary side.

1. Faith, so soon as it has a being in the soul, is like the child that has a being in the mother's lap ; it must have something to feed upon ; not something at a distance, afar off, to be purchased (I speak now as to justification from the curse), but something by promise made over of grace to the soul ; something to feed upon to support from the fears of perishing by the curse for sin. Nor can it rest content with all duties and performances that other graces shall put the soul upon ; nor with any of its own works, until it reaches and takes hold of the righteousness of Christ. Faith is like the dove, which found no rest anywhere until it returned to Noah into the ark. But this our Pharisee understandeth not.

Perhaps some may object, that from this way of reasoning it is apparent, that sanctification is first ; since the soul may have faith, and so a principle of grace in it, and yet, as yet it cannot find Christ to feed and refresh the soul withal.

Ans. From this way of reasoning it is not at all apparent that sanctification, or a principle of grace, is in the soul before righteousness is imputed and the soul made perfectly righteous thereby. And for the clearing up of this, let me propose a few things.

1. Justifying righteousness, to wit, the obedience of that one man, Christ, is imputed to the sinner, to justify him in God's sight ; for his law calls for perfect righteousness, and before that be come to, and put upon the poor sinner, God cannot bestow other spiritual blessings upon him ; because by the law he has pronounced him accursed ; by the

which curse he is also so holden, until a righteousness shall be found upon the sinner, that the law and divine justice can approve of, and be contented with. So then, as to the justification of the sinner, there must be a righteousness for God ; I say, for the sinner, and for God : for the sinner to be clothed with, and for God to look upon, that he may, for the sake thereof in a way of justice, bless the sinner with forgiveness of sins : for forgiveness of sins is the next thing that followeth upon the appearance of the sinner before God in the righteousness of Christ ; Rom. iv. 6, 7.

Now, upon this forgiveness follows the second blessing. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us ; and so, consequently, hath obtained for us the forgiveness of sins : for he that is delivered from the curse hath received forgiveness of sins, or rather is made partaker thereof. Now, being made a partaker thereof, the second blessing immediately follows, to wit, the blessing of Abraham, that is, the promise of the Spirit through faith ; Gal. iii. 13. 14. But this our Pharisee understandeth not.

But now, although it be of absolute necessity that imputed righteousness be first, to the soul ; that is, that perfect righteousness be found upon the sinner first by God, that he may bestow other blessings in a way of justice :

Let God then put the righteousness of his Son upon me ; and by virtue of that, let the second blessing of God come into me ; and by virtue of that, let me be made to see myself a sinner, and Christ's righteousness, and my need of it, in the doctrine of it, as it is revealed in the scriptures of truth. Let me then believe this doctrine to be true, and be brought by my belief to repentance for my sins, to hungering and thirsting vehemently after this righteousness : for this is the kingdom of God, and his righteousness. Yea, let me pray, and cry, and sigh, and groan, day and night, to the God of this righteousness, that he will of grace make me a partaker. And let me thus be prostrate before my God, all the time that in wisdom he shall think fit ; and in his own time he shall shew me that I am a justified person, a

pardoned person, a person in whom the Spirit of God hath dwelt for some time, though I knew it not.

So then, justification before God is one thing, and justification in mine own eyes is another ; not that these are two justifications, but the same righteousness by which I stand justified before God, may be seen of God, when I am ignorant of it : yea, for the sake of it I may be received, pardoned, and accounted righteous of him, and yet I may not understand it. Yea, further, he may proceed in the way of blessing to bless me with additional blessings, and yet I be ignorant of it.

So that the question is not, Do I find that I am righteous ? but, Am I so ? Doth God find me so, when he seeth that the righteousness of his Son is upon me, being made over to me by an act of his grace ? For I am justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God ; Rom. iii. 24. But this our Pharisee understandeth not.

I am then made righteous first by the righteousness of another ; and because I am thus righteous, God accepteth of my person as such, and bestoweth upon me his grace ; the which, at first, for want of skill and experience in the word of righteousness, I make use of but poorly, and have need to be certified that I am made righteous, and that I have eternal life ; not by faith first and immediately, but by the written word which is called “ the word of faith ;” which word declareth unto me (to whom grace, and so faith in the seed of it, is given), that I have eternal life, and that I should with boldness, in peace and joy, believe on the Son of God ; Heb. v. 13 ; Rom. xv. 13 ; 1 John v. 13. But,

Again, I, in the first acts of my faith, when I come at Christ, do not accept of him, because I know I am righteous, either with imputed righteousness, or with that which is inherent. Both these, as to my present privilege in them, may be hidden from mine eyes, and I only put upon taking

of encouragement to close with Christ for life and righteousness, as he is set forth to be a propitiation before mine eyes, in the word of the truth of the gospel ; to which word I adhere as, or because I find, I want peace with God in my soul, and because I am convinced that the means of peace is not to be found any where but in Jesus Christ. Now, by my thus adhering to him, I find stay for my soul, and peace to my conscience, because the word doth ascertain to me, that he that believeth on him hath remission of sins, hath eternal life, and shall be saved from the wrath to come.

But, alas ! who knows (the many straits, and as I may say, the stress of weather, I mean) the cold blasts of hell, with which the poor soul is assaulted, betwixt its receiving of grace, and its sensible closing with Jesus Christ ? None, I dare say, but it and its fellows. "The heart knows its own bitterness ; and a stranger intermeddleth not with his joy ;" Prov. xiv. 10. No sooner doth Satan perceive what God is doing with the soul, in a way of grace and mercy, but he endeavoureth what he may to make the renewing thereof bitter and wearisome work to the sinner. O what mists, what mountains, what clouds, what darkness, what objections, what false apprehensions of God, of Christ, of grace, of the word, and of the soul's condition, doth he now lay before it, and haunt it with ; whereby he dejecteth, casteth down, daunteth, distresseth, and almost driveth it quite into despair ! Now, by the reason of these things, faith (and all the grace that is in the soul) is hard put to it to come at the promise, and by the promise of Christ ; as it is said, when the tempest and great danger of shipwreck lay upon the vessel in which Paul was, they had "much work to come by the boat ;" Acts xxvii. 16. For Satan's design is, if he cannot keep the soul from Christ, to make his coming to him, and closing with him, as hard, as difficult and troublesome, as he by his devices can. But faith, true justifying faith, is a grace, is not weary by all that Satan can do ; but meditateth upon the word, and taketh stomach, and courage, fighteth and crieth,

and by crying and fighting, by help from heaven, its way is made through all the oppositions that appear so mighty, and draweth up at last to Jesus Christ, into whose bosom it putteth the soul, where, for the time, it sweetly resteth, after its marvellous tossings to and fro.

And besides what hath been said, let me yet illustrate this truth unto you by this familiar similitude.

Suppose a man, a traitor, that by the law should die for his sin, is yet such an one that the king has exceeding kindness for ; may not the king pardon this man of his clemency ; yea, order that his pardon should be drawn up and sealed, and so in every sense be made sure ; and yet, for the present, keep all this close enough from the ears or the knowledge of the person therein concerned ? Yea, may not the king after all leave this person, with others under the same transgression, to sue for and obtain this pardon with great expense and difficulty, with many tears and heart-achings, with many fears and dubious cogitations ?

Why, this is the case between God and the soul that he saveth ; he saveth him, pardoneth him, and secureth him from the curse and death that is due unto sin, but yet doth not tell him so ; but he ascends in his great suit unto God for it. Only this difference we must make between God and the potentates of this world ; God cannot pardon before the sinner stands before him righteous by the righteousness of Christ ; because he has in judgment, and justice, and righteousness, threatened and concluded, that he that wants righteousness shall die.

And I say again, because this righteousness is God's and at God's disposal only, it is God that must make a man righteous before he can forgive him his sins, or bestow upon him of his secondary blessings ; to wit, his Spirit, and the graces thereof. And I say again, it must be this righteousness ; for it can be no other that justifies a sinner from sin in the sight of God, and from the sentence of the law.

Secondly, This is, and must be the way of God with the sinner, that faith may not only have an object to work upon, but a motive to work by.

(1.) Here, as I said, faith hath an object to work upon, and that in the person of Christ, and that personal righteousness of his, which he in the days of his flesh did finish to justify sinners withal. This is, I say, the object of faith for justification, whereunto the soul by it doth continually resort. Hence David saith to Christ, "Be thou my strong habitation (or as you have it in the margin, Be thou to me a rock of habitation) whereunto I may continually resort;" Psalm lxxi. 3. And two things he infers by so saying.

The first is, That the Christian is a man under continual exercises, sometimes one way, and sometimes another; but all his exercises have a tendency in them more or less to spoil him; therefore he is rather for flying to Christ than for grappling with them in and by his own power.

The second is, that Christ is of God our shelter as to this very thing. Hence his name is said to be "a strong tower," and that the righteous run into it, and are safe, Prov. xviii. 10. That also of David in the fifty-sixth Psalm is very pregnant to this purpose; "Mine enemies," saith he, "would daily swallow me up; for they be many that fight against me, O thou Most High." And what then? Why, saith he, "I will trust in thee." Thus you see, faith hath an object to work upon to carry the soul unto, and to secure the soul in times of difficulty, and that object is Jesus Christ and his righteousness. But,

(2.) Again, as faith hath an object to work upon, so it hath a motive to work by; and that is the love of God in giving of Christ to the soul for righteousness. Nor is there any profession, religion, or duty and performance, that is at all regarded, where this faith, which by such means can work, is wanting. "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love" (so Gal. v. 6) acteth lovely; or, by faith whose fruit is love (though true faith hath love for its offspring); but faith which worketh by love, that is true, saving, justifying faith, as it beholdeth the righteousness of Christ as made over to the soul for justification; so it beholdeth love, love to be the cause of its so being made over.

It beholdeth love in the Father, in giving of his Son, and love in the Son, in giving of himself to be made soul-saving righteousness for me. And seeing it worketh by it, that is, it is stirred up to an holy boldness of venturing all eternal concerns upon Christ, and also to an holy, endeared, affecting love of him, for his sweet and blessed redeeming love. Hence the apostle saith, "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again," 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

Thus then is the heart united in affection and love to the Father and the Son, for the love that they have shewed to the poor sinner in their thus delivering him from the wrath to come. For by this love faith worketh, in sweet passions and pangs of love, to all that are thus reconciled, as this sinner seeth he is. The motive then, whereby faith worketh, both as to justification and sanctification, the great motive to them, I say, is love, the love of God, and the love of Christ: "We love him, because he first loved us." That is, when our faith hath told us so; for so are the words above, "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us." And then, "We love him, because he first loved us." And then, "This commandment have we from him, that he that loveth God, loveth his brother also," 1 John iv. 16-21. But this our poor Pharisee understandeth not. But,

5. Righteousness by imputation must be first, to cut off boasting from the heart, conceit, and lips of men. Wherefore he saith, as before, that we are justified freely by the grace of God, not through, or for the sake of an holy gospel-principle in us; but "through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ," &c. "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay, but by the law of faith." And this is the law of faith, by which we are justified as before; Rom. iii. 27, 28.

Nor can any man propound such an essential way to cut off boasting as this, which is of God's providing: For what

has man here to boast of ? No righteousness, nor yet of the application of it to his soul. The righteousness is Christ's, not the sinner's. The imputation is God's, not the sinner's. The cause of imputation is God's grace and love, not the sinner's works of righteousness. The time of God's imputing righteousness is when the sinner was a sinner, wrapped up in ignorance, and wallowing in his vanity ; not when he was good, or when he was seeking of it ; for his inward gospel-goodness is a fruit of the imputation of justifying righteousness. Where is boasting then ? Where is our Pharisee then, with his brags of not being as other men are ? It is excluded, and he with it, and the poor Publican taken into favour, that boasting might be cut off. "Not of works, lest any man should boast." There is no trust to be put in men ; those that seem most humble, and that to appearance, and farthest off from pride, it is natural to them to boast ; yea, now they have no cause to boast ; for by grace are we saved through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God. "Not of works, lest any man should boast."

But if man is so prone to boast, when yet there is no ground of boasting in him, nor yet in what he doth ; how would he have boasted had he been permitted by the God of heaven to have done something, though that something had been but a very little something, towards his justification ? But God has prevented boasting by doing as he has done ; Eph. ii. 8, 9. Nay, the apostle addeth further (lest any man should boast), that as to good works, "We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them ; ver. 10. Can the tree boast, since it was God that made it such ? Where is boasting then ? "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption : that, according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord ;" 1 Cor. i. 30, 31. Where is boasting then ? Where is our Pharisee then, with all his works

of righteousness, and with his boasts of being better than his neighbours ?

It may be said, If we should be justified for the sake of our inherent righteousness, since that righteousness is the gift of God, will it not follow that boasting is, in the occasion thereof, cut off ?

Ans. No ; for although the principle of inherent righteousness be the gift of God, yet it bringeth forth fruits by man, and through man ; and so man having a hand therein, though he should have ever so little, he has an occasion offered him to boast. Yea, if a man should be justified before God by the grace, or the working of the grace of faith in him, he would have ground of occasion to boast ; because faith, though it be the gift of God, yet as it acteth in man, takes man along with it in its so acting ; yea, the acting of faith is as often attributed to the man by whom it is acted, and oftener, than to the grace itself. How then can it be, but that man must have a hand therein, and so a ground therein, or thereof to boast ?

But now, since justification from the curse of the law before God lieth only and wholly in God's imputing of Christ's righteousness to a man, and that too, while the man to whom it is imputed is in himself wicked and ungodly, there is no room left for boasting before God, for that is the boasting intended ; but rather an occasion given to shame and confusion of face, and to stop the mouth for ever, since justification comes in a way so far above him, so vastly without him, his skill, help, or what else soever ; Ezek. xvi. 61-63.

6. Righteousness by imputation must be first, that justification may not be of debt, but of mercy and grace. This is evident from reason. It is meet that God should therefore justify us by a righteousness of his own, not of his own prescribing ; for that he may do, and yet the righteousness be ours ; but of his own providing, that the righteousness may be his. "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt ;" Rom. iv. 2-4.

If I work for justifying righteousness, and that way get righteousness, my justification is not of grace, but of debt. God giveth it not unto me, but he oweth it unto me ; so then it is no longer his, but mine : mine, not of grace, but of debt. And if so, then I thank him not for his remission of sins, nor for the kingdom of heaven, nor for eternal life ; for if justifying righteousness is of debt, then when I have it, and what dependeth thereon, I have but mine own ; that which God oweth to me.

Nor will it help at all to say, But I obtain it by God's grace in me ; because that doth not cut off my works, nor prevent my having of a hand in my justifying righteousness.

Suppose I give a man materials, even all materials that are necessary to the completing of such or such a thing ; yet if he worketh, though the materials be mine, I am to him a debtor, and he deserveth a reward. Thou sayst, God has given thee his Spirit, his grace, and all other things that are necessary for the working up of a complete righteousness. Well, but is thy work required to the finishing of this righteousness ? If so, this is not the righteousness that justifieth ; because it is such as has thy hand, thy workmanship therein, and so obtains a reward. And observe it, righteousness, justifying righteousness, consisteth not in a principle of righteousness, but in works of righteousness ; that is, in good duties, in obedience, in a walking in the law to the pleasing of the law, and the content of the justice of God.

I suppose again, that thou shalt conclude with me, that justifying righteousness, I mean that which justifies from the curse of the law, resideth only in the obedience of the Son of God ; and that the principle of grace that is in thee is none of that righteousness, no, not then when thou hast to the utmost walked with God according to thy gift and grace ; yet if thou concludest that this principle must be in thee, and these works done by thee, before this justifying righteousness is imputed to thee for justification, thou layest in a caveat against justification by grace ; and also con-

cludest, that though thou art not justified by thy righteousness, but by Christ, yet thou art justified by Christ's righteousness for the sake of thine own, and so makest justification to be still a debt. But here the scripture doth also cut thee off: "Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess the land" (which was but a type of heaven); and if our righteousness cannot give us, by its excellency, a share in the type, be sure that for it we shall never be sharers in the anti-type itself. "Understand, therefore, that the Lord thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiff-necked people;" Deut. ix. 5, 6.

Gospel-performances, therefore, are not first; that was first, for the sake of which God did receive these people into favour with himself, and that was a covenant-righteousness; and where could that covenant-righteousness be found, but in the Prince, Mediator, and High Priest of the covenant? For it was he, and he only, that was appointed of God, nor could any but himself bring in everlasting righteousness; Dan. ix. 24, 25. This is evident from these texts last mentioned; it was not for their righteousness that they possessed the land.

Again, As it was not for their righteousness that they were made possessors of the land, so it was not for the sake of their righteousness that they were made partakers of such a righteousness that did make them possess the land. This is plain to reason; for personal righteousness, when by us performed, is of no worth to obtain of God a justifying righteousness. But if it be of no worth to obtain a justifying righteousness, then, it seems, it is more commodious to both parties than justifying righteousness. First, it is more commodious to him that worketh it; and, secondly, it is more commodious unto him that receiveth it, else why doth he for it give us a due debt, and so put upon us the everlasting justifying righteousness?

Perhaps it will be objected, That God doth all this of

grace ; but I answer, That these are but fallacious words, spoken by the tongue of the crafty. For we are not now discoursing of what rewards God can give to the operations of his own grace in us, but whether he can in a way of justice (or how he will) bestow any spiritual blessing upon sinful creatures, against whom, for sin, he has pronounced the curse of the law, before he hath found them in a righteousness, that is proved to be as good justice and righteousness, as is the justice and righteousness of the law, with which we have to do.

I assert he cannot, because he cannot lie, because he cannot deny himself : for if he should first threaten the transgression of the law with death, and yet afterwards receive the transgressor to grace, without a plenary satisfaction, what is this but to lie, and to diminish his truth, righteousness, and faithfulness ; yea, and also to overthrow the sanction and perfect holiness of his law ? His mercy, therefore, must act so towards the sinner that justice may be satisfied, and that can never be without a justifying righteousness.

Now what this justifying righteousness should be, and when imputed, that is the question. I say, it is the righteousness, or obedience of the Son of God in the flesh, which he assumed, and so his own, and the righteousness of no body else otherwise than by imputation.

I say again, that this righteousness must be imputed first, that the sinner may stand just in God's sight from the curse, that God might deal with him both in a way of justice as well as mercy, and yet do the sinner no harm.

But you may ask, How did God deal with sinners before his righteousness was actually in being ?

I answer, He did then deal with sinners even as he dealeth with them now ; he justified them by it, by virtue of the suretyship of him that was to bring it in. Christ became surety for us, and by his suretyship laid himself under an obligation for those for whom he became a surety to bring in this everlasting and justifying righteousness, and by virtue of this, those of his elect that came into and

went out of the world before he came to perform his work were saved through the forbearance of God. Wherefore, before the Lord came, they were saved for the Lord's sake, and for the sake of his name. And they that were spiritually wise understood it, and pleaded it as their necessities required, and the Lord accepted them; Heb. vii. 22; Rom. iv. 24; Dan. ix. 17; Psalm xxv. 11.

7. Righteousness by imputation must be first, that justification may be certain; "Therefore it is of faith (of the righteousness that faith layeth hold on), that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed;" Rom. iv. 16. "That the promise,"—What promise? The promise of remission of sins, &c., might be sure.

Now a promise of remission of sins supposeth a righteousness going before; for there is no forgiveness of sins, nor promise of forgiveness, for the sake of righteousness that shall be by us, but that already found in Christ as head, and so imputed to the elect for their remission. "God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you," Eph. iv. 32; For Christ's sake; that this, for the sake of the righteousness of Christ. Imputed righteousness must be first; yea, it must be before forgiveness, and forgiveness is extended by God then when we lie in our blood, though to us it is manifested afterwards. Therefore it is *of* faith; he saith not *by* it, respecting the act of faith, but *of*, respecting the doctrine or word which presenteth me with this blessed imputed righteousness: they that are of faith are the children of faithful Abraham. They that are of the doctrine of faith, for all the elect are the sons of that doctrine in which is this righteousness of Christ contained; yea, they are begotten by it of God to this inheritance, to their comfortable enjoyment of the comfort of it by faith.

That the promise might be sure to all the seed, to all them wrapped up in the promise, and so begotten and born. That it might be sure, implying that there is no certain way of salvation for the elect but this; because God can never by other means reconcile us to himself, for his heavenly eyes perceive, yea, they spy faults in the best of our

gospel performances ; yea, our faith is faulty, and also imperfect : how then should remission be extended to us for the sake of that ? But now the righteousness of Christ is perfect, perpetual and stable as the great mountains ; wherefore he is called the rock of our salvation, because a man may as soon tumble the mountains before him, as sin can make invalid the righteousness of Christ, when, and unto whom, God shall impute it for justice ; Psalm xxxvi. In the margin it is said to be like the mountain of God ; to wit, called Mount Zion, or that Moriah on which the temple was built, and upon which it stood ; all other bottoms are fickle, all other righteousnesses are so feeble, short, narrow, yea, so full of imperfections ; for what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, Christ did for us in the similitude of sinful flesh. But what could not the law do ? Why, it could not give us righteousness, nor strengthen us to perform it. It could not give us any certain, solid, well-grounded hope of remission of sin and salvation.

Wherefore this righteousness being imputed, justice findeth no fault therewith, but consenteth to the extending to the sinner those blessings that tend to perfect his happiness in the heavens.

8. Righteousness by imputation must be first, that in all things Christ may have the pre-eminence. Christ is head of the church, and therefore let him have the highest honour in the soul ; but how can he have that, if any precede as to justification before his perfect righteousness be imputed ? If it be said, grace may be in the soul, though the soul doth not act it until the moment that justifying righteousness shall be imputed :

I ask, What should it do there before, or to what purpose is it there, if it be not acted ? And again, how came it thither, how got the soul possession of it while it was unjustified ? or, How could God in justice give it to a person, that by the law stood condemned, before they were acquitted from that condemnation ? And I say, nothing can set the soul free from that curse but the perfect obedience

of Christ ; nor that either, if it be not imputed for that end to the sinner by the grace of God.

Imputed, that is, reckoned or accounted to him. And why should it not be accounted to him for righteousness ? What did Christ bring it into the world for ? for the righteous or for sinners ? No doubt for sinners. And how must it be reckoned to them ? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision ; not as righteous, but as sinners. And how are they to consider of themselves, even then when they first are apprehensive of their need of this righteousness ? Are they to think that they are righteous, or sinners ?

And again, How are they to believe concerning themselves, then when they put forth the first act of faith towards this righteousness for justification ? Are they to think that they are righteous, or sinners ? Sinners, doubtless, they are to reckon themselves, and as such to reckon themselves justified by this righteousness. And this is according to the sentence of God, as appeareth by such sayings.

“ For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.”

“ But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

“ For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son,” &c., Rom. v.

Out of these words I gather these three things.

1. That Christ by God's appointment died for us.
2. That by his death he reconciled us to God.
3. That even then, when the very act of reconciliation was in performing, and also when performed, we were ungodly, sinners, enemies.

Now, the act by which we are said to be reconciled to God, while ungodly, while sinners, and while enemies, was Christ's offering himself a sacrifice for us, which is, in the words above mentioned, called his death . Christ died for the ungodly ; Christ died for us while sinners ; Christ reconciled us to God by his death . And as Christ is said to

die for us, so the Father is said to impute righteousness to us ; to wit, as we are without works, as we are ungodly. "Now to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." He worketh not, but is ungodly, when this gracious act of God, in imputing the righteousness of Christ to him, is extended ; when he shall believe, his faith is counted to him for righteousness. And why should we not have the benefit of the righteousness, since it was completed for us while we were yet ungodly ? Yea, we have the benefit of it : "For when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son."

When I say the benefit, I mean that benefit that we are capable of, and that is justification before God ; for that a man may be capable of while he is in himself ungodly, because this comes to him by the righteousness of another. True, were it to be his own righteousness by which he was to be justified, he could not : but the righteousness is Christ's, and that imputed by God, not as a reward for work, or of debt, but freely by his grace ; and therefore may be, and is so, while the person concerned is without works, ungodly, and a sinner.

And he that denieth that we are capable of this benefit while we are sinners and ungodly, may with the like reason deny that we are created beings : for that which is done for a man without him, may be done for him at any time which they that do it shall appoint. While a man is a beggar, may not I make him worth ten thousand a-year, if I can and will : and yet he may not know thereof in that moment that I make him so ? yet the revenue of that estate shall really be his from the moment that I make him so, and he shall know it too at the rent-day.

This is the case : we are sinners and ungodly ; there is a righteousness wrought out by Jesus Christ which God hath designed we shall be made righteous by : and by it, if he will impute it to us, we shall be righteous in his sight ; even then when we are yet ungodly in ourselves : for he justifies the ungodly.

Now, though it is irregular and blameworthy in man to justify the wicked, because he cannot provide and clothe him with a justifying righteousness, yet it is glorious, and for ever worthy of praise, for God to do it: because it is in his power, not only to forgive, but to make a man righteous, even then when he is a sinner, and to justify him while he is ungodly.

But it may be yet objected, that though God has received satisfaction for sin, and so sufficient terms of reconciliation by the obedience and death of his Son, yet he imputeth it not unto us, but upon condition of our becoming good.

Ans. This must not be admitted: For,

1. The scripture saith not so; but that we are reconciled to God by the death of his Son, and justified too, and that while or when we are sinners and ungodly.

2. If this objection carrieth truth in it, then it follows that the Holy Ghost, faith, and so all grace, may be given to us, and we may have it dwelling in us, yea, acting in us, before we stand righteous in the judgment of the law before God (for nothing can make us stand just before God in the judgment of the law, but the obedience of the Son of God without us.) And if the Holy Ghost, faith, and so, consequently, the habit of every grace, may be in us, acting in us, before Christ's righteousness be by God imputed to us, then we are not justified as sinners and ungodly, but as persons inherently holy and righteous before.

But I have shewed you that this cannot be, therefore righteousness for justification must be imputed first. And here let me present the reader with two or three things.

1. That justification before God is one thing, and justification to the understanding and conscience is another. Now, I am treating of justification before God, not of it as to man's understanding and conscience: and I say, a man may be justified before God, even then when himself knoweth nothing thereof; Isa. xl. 2; Mark ii. 5; and while he hath not faith about it, but is ungodly.

2. There is justification by faith, by faith's applying of

that righteousness to the understanding and conscience, which God hath of his grace imputed for righteousness to the soul for justification in his sight. And this is that by which we, as to sense and feeling, have peace with God: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ;" Rom. v. 1. And these two the apostle keepeth distinct in the 10th verse: that "while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." He addeth, "And not only so, but we joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement," verse 11. Here you see, that to be reconciled to God by the death of his Son is one thing, and for us actually to receive by faith this reconciliation is another: and not only so, but we have "received the atonement."

3. Men do not gather their justification from God's single act of imputing of righteousness, that we might stand clear in his sight from the curse and judgment of the law; but from the word of God, which they understand not till it is brought to their understanding by the light and glory of the Holy Ghost.

We are not, therefore, in the ministry of the word to pronounce any man justified, from a supposition that God has imputed righteousness to him (since that act is not known to us), until the fruits that follow thereupon do break out before our eyes; to wit, the signs and effects of the Holy Ghost indwelling in our souls. And then we may conclude it, that is, that such a one stands justified before God, yet not for the sake of his inherent righteousness, nor yet for the fruits thereof, and so not for the sake of the act of faith, but for the sake of Jesus Christ his doing and suffering for us.

Nor will it avail to object, that if at first we stand justified before God by his imputing of Christ's righteousness unto us, though faith be not in us to act, we may always stand justified so; and so what need of faith? for therefore are we justified, first, by the imputation of God, as we are ungodly, that thereby we may be made capable of receiving

the Holy Ghost and his graces in a way of righteousness and justice. Besides, God will have those that he shall justify by his grace through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ to have the Holy Ghost, and so faith, that they may know and believe the things not only that shall be, but that already are, freely given to us of God. "Now," says Paul, "we have received, not the spirit of the world but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God;" 1 Cor. ii. 12. To know, that is, to believe: it is given to you to believe, who believe according to the working of his mighty power; "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us," preceding to our believing; John iv. 16. He then that is justified by God's imputation, shall believe by the power of the Holy Ghost; for that must come, and work faith, and strengthen the soul to act it, because imputed righteousness has gone before. He then that believeth shall be saved; for his believing is a sign, not a cause, of his being made righteous before God by imputation; and he that believeth not shall be damned.

AND THUS MUCH FOR THE PHARISEE, AND FOR HIS INFORMATION. AND NOW I COME TO THAT PART OF THE TEXT WHICH REMAINS, AND WHICH RESPECTETH THE PUBLICAN.

"And the Publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner."

What this Publican was, I have shewed you, both with respect to nation, office, and disposition. Wherefore I shall not here trouble the reader as to that. We now, therefore, come to his repentance in the whole and in the parts of it; concerning which I shall take notice of several things, some more remote, and some more near to the matter and life of it.

But, first, let us see how cross the Pharisee and the Publican did lie in the temple one to another, while they both were presenting of their prayers to God.

1. The Pharisee he goes in boldly, fears nothing, but trusteth in himself that his state is good, that God loves him,

and that there was no doubt to be made but of his good speed in this his religious enterprise. But, alas! poor Publican, he sneaks, crawls into the temple, and when he comes there, stands behind, aloof, off, as one not worthy to approach the divine presence.

2. The Pharisee at his approach hath his mouth full of many fine things, whereby he strokes himself over the head, and in effect calls himself one of God's dear sons, that always kept close to his will, abode with him, or, as the prodigal's brother said, "Lo, these many years do I serve thee; neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment;" Luke xv. 29. But alas! poor Publican, thy guilt, as to these pleas, stops thy mouth; thou hast not one good thing to say of thyself, not one rag of righteousness; thy conscience tells thee so; yea, and if thou shouldst now attempt to set a good face on it, and for thy credit say something after the Pharisee in way of thine own commendations, yet here is God on the one side, the Pharisee on the other, together with thine own heart, to give thee a check, to rebuke thee, to condemn thee, and to lay thee even to the ground for thy insolence.

3. The Pharisee in his approach to God, wipes his fingers of the Publican's enormities, will not come nigh him, lest he should defile himself with his beastly rags: "I am not as other men are, nor yet as this Publican." But the poor Publican, alas for him! his fingers are not clean, nor can he tell how to make them so; besides, he meekly and quietly puts up with this reflection of the Pharisee upon him, and by silent behaviour justifies the severe sentence of that self-righteous man, concluding with him, that for his part he is wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, and not worthy to come nigh, or to stand by, so good, so virtuous, so holy, and so deserving a man as our sparkling Pharisee is.

4. The Pharisee, as at feasts and synagogues, chose the chief and first place for his person, and for his prayer, counting that the Publican was not meet, ought not to presume to let his foul breath once come out of his pol-

luted lips in the temple, till *he* had made his holy prayer. And, poor Publican, how dost thou hear and put up this with all other affronts, counting even as the Pharisee counted of thee, that thou wast but a dog in comparison of him, and therefore not fit to go before, but to come as in chains, behind, and forbear to present thy mournful supplication to the holy God, till he had presented his, in his own conceit, brave, gay, and fine oration ?

5. The Pharisee, as he is numerous in his repeating his good deeds, so is he stiff in standing to them, bearing up himself, that he hath now sufficient foundation on which to bear up his soul against all the attempts of the law, the devil, sin, and hell. But, alas, poor Publican ! thou standest naked, nay, worse than naked ; for thou art clothed with filthy garments, thy sins cover thy face with shame : nor hast thou in, or of thyself, any defence from, or shelter against, the attempts, assaults, and censures of thy spiritual enemies, but art now in thine own eyes (though in the temple) cast forth into the open field stark-naked, to the loathing of thy person, as in the day that thou wast born, and there ready to be devoured and torn in pieces for thy transgressions against thy God.

What wilt thou do, Publican ? What wilt thou do ? Come, let us see ; which way wilt thou begin to address thyself to God ? Bethink thyself : hast thou any thing to say ? speak out, man : the Pharisee by this time has done, and received his sentence : make an “ O yes ;” let all the world be silent ; yea, let the angels of heaven draw near and listen ; for the Publican is come to have to do with God ! yea, is come from the receipt of custom into the temple to pray to him.

“ And the Publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.” And is this thy way, poor Publican ! O cunning sinner ! O crafty Publican ! thy wisdom has outdone the Pharisee ; for it is better to apply ourselves to God’s mercy than to trust to ourselves that we are righteous. But that the Publican did

hit the mark, yea, get nearer unto, and more in the heart of God and his Son than the Pharisee, the sequel will make manifest.

Take notice then of this profound speech of the Publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Yea, the Son of God was so delighted with this prayer, that for the sake of it, he even as a limner draweth out the Publican in his manner of standing, behaviour, gestures, &c., while he makes this prayer to God: wherefore we will take notice both of the one and of the other; for surely his gestures put lustre into his prayer and repentance.

1. His prayer you see is this, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

His gestures in his prayer were in general three.

1. He "stood afar off."

2. He "would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven."

3. He "smote upon his breast," with his fist, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

To begin first with his prayer. In this prayer we have two things to consider of.

1. His confession: I am a sinner.

2. His imploring of help against this malady: "God be merciful to me a sinner."

In his confession divers things are to be taken notice of. As—

1. The fairness and simplicity of his confession; "A sinner:" I am a sinner; "God be merciful to me a sinner." This indeed he was, and this indeed he confesses; and this, I say, he doth of godly simplicity. For a man to confess himself a sinner, it is to speak all against himself that can be spoken. And man, as degenerate, is too much an hypocrite, and too much a self-flatterer, thus to confess against himself, unless made simple and honest through the power of conviction upon his heart. And it is worth your noting, that he doth not say he was, or had been, but that at that time his state was such, to wit, a sinner. "God be merciful to me a sinner," or who am, and now stand before thee a sinner, in my sins.

Now, a little to shew you what it is to be a sinner ; for every one that sinneth may not in a proper sense be called a sinner. Saints, the sanctified in Christ Jesus, do often sin, but it is not proper to call them sinners : but here the Publican calls himself a sinner ; and therefore in effect calls himself an evil tree, one that beareth no good fruit ; one whose body and soul is polluted, whose mind and conscience is defiled ; one who hath walked according to the course of this world, and after the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience : they having their minds at enmity against God, and are taken captive by the devil at his will ; a sinner, one whose trade hath been in sin, and the works of Satan all his days.

Thus he waives all pleas, and stoops his neck immediately to the block. Though he was a base man, yet he might have had pleas ; pleas, I say, as well as the Pharisee, though not so many, yet as good. He was of the stock of Abraham, a Jew, an Israelite of the Israelites, and so a privileged man in the religion of the Jews, else what doth he do in the temple ? Yea, why did not the Pharisee, if he was a heathen, lay that to his charge while he stood before God ? But the truth is, he could not ; for the Publican was a Jew as well as the Pharisee, and consequently might, had he been so disposed, have pleaded that before God. But he would not, he could not, for his conscience was under convictions, the awakenings of God were upon him ; wherefore his privileges melt away like grease, and fly from him like the chaff of the summer threshing-floor, which the wind taketh up and scattereth as the dust ; he therefore lets all privileges fall, and pleads only that he is a sinner.

2. In this confession he judges and condemns himself : For a man to say, I am a sinner, is as much as to say, I am contrary to the holiness of God, a transgressor of the law, and consequently an object of the curse, and an heir of hell. The Publican, therefore, goeth very far in this his confession ; For,

3. In the third place, To confess that there is nothing in

him, done or can be done by him, that should allure, or prevail with God to do any thing for him : for a sinner cannot do good ; no, not work up his heart unto one good thought : no, though he should have heaven itself if he could, or was sure to burn in hell-fire for ever and ever if he could not. For sin, where it is in possession, and bears rule, as it doth in every one that we may properly call a sinner, there it hath the mastery of the man, hath bound up his senses in cords and chains, and made nothing so odious to the soul as the things that are of the Spirit of God. Wherefore it is said of such, that they are " Enemies in their minds ;" that " The carnal mind is enmity against God," and that " Wickedness proceedeth of the wicked ;" and that the Ethiopian may as well change his skin, or the leopard his spots, as they that are accustomed to do evil may learn to do well ; Col. i. ; Rom. viii. ; 1 Sam. xxiv. 13 ; Jer. xiii. 23.

4. In this confession he implicitly acknowledgeth that sin is the worst of things, forasmuch as it layeth the soul out of the reach of all remedy that can be found under heaven. Nothing below or short of the mercy of God can deliver a poor soul from this fearful malady. This the Pharisee did not see. Doubtless he did conclude, that at some time or other he had sinned ; but he never in all his life did arrive to a sight of what sin was : his knowledge of it was but false and counterfeit, as is manifest by his cure ; to wit, his own righteousness. For take this for a truth undeniable, that he that thinks himself better before God, because of his reformatations, never yet had the true knowledge of his sin : But the poor Publican he had it, he had it in truth, as is manifest, because it drives him to the only sovereign remedy. For indeed, the right knowledge of sin, in the filth, and guilt, and damning power thereof, makes a man to understand, that not any thing but grace and mercy by Christ can secure him from the hellish ruins thereof.

Suppose a man sick of an apoplexy unto death, and should for his remedy make use only of those things that are good against the second ague, would not this demon-

strate that this man was not sensible of the nature and danger of this disease? The same may be said of every sinner that shall make use only of those means to justify him before God, that can hardly make him go for a good Christian before judicious men. But the poor Publican, he knew the nature and the danger of his disease; and knew also, that nothing but mercy, infinite mercy, could cure him thereof.

5. This confession of the Publican declareth, that he himself was borne up now by an almighty though invisible hand. For sin, when seen in its colours, and when appearing in its monstrous shape, frighteth all away from God. This is manifest by Cain, Judas, Saul, and others, who could not stand up before God under the sense and appearance of their sin, but fled before him, one to one fruit of despair, and one to another. But now this Publican, though he apprehends his sin, that himself was one that was a sinner, yet he beareth up, cometh into the temple, approaches the presence of an holy and sin-revenging God, stands before him, and confesses that he is that man that sin had defiled, and that had brought him into the danger of damnation thereby.

This therefore was a mighty act of the Publican. He went against the voice of conscience, against sense and feeling, against the curse and condemning verdict of the law: he went, as I may say, upon hot burning coals to one that to sin and sinners is a consuming fire.

Now then, did the Publican this of his own head, or from his own mind? No, verily; there was some supernatural power within that did secretly prompt him on, and strengthen him to this more noble venture. True, there is nothing more common among wicked men, than to trick and toy, and play with this saying of the Publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner:" not at all being sensible either what sin is, or of their need of mercy. And such sinners shall find their speed in the Publican's prayer far otherwise than the Publican sped himself; it will happen unto them much as it happened unto the vagabond Jews,

exorcists, who took upon them to call over them that had evil spirits, the name of the Lord Jesus ; that were beaten by that spirit, and made fly out of that house naked and wounded, Acts xix. 13. Poor sinner, thou wilt say the Publican's prayer, and make the Publican's confession, and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner." But hold ; dost thou do it with the Publican's heart, sense, dread, and simplicity ? If not, thou dost but abuse the Publican and his prayer, and thyself and his God ; and shalt find God rejecting of thee and thy prayers, saying, The Publican I know ; his prayers and godly tears I know ; but who or what art thou ? and will send thee away naked. They are the hungry that he filleth with good things, but the rich (and the senseless) he sendeth empty away.

For my part, I find it one of the hardest things that I can put my soul upon, even to come to God, when warmly sensible that I am a sinner, for a share in grace and mercy. Oh ! methinks it seems to me as if the whole face of the heavens were set against me. Yea, the very thought of God strikes me through ; I cannot bear up, I cannot stand before him ; I cannot but with a thousand tears say, "God be merciful to me a sinner ;" Ezra ix. 15.

At another time, when my heart is more hard and stupid, and when his terror doth not make me afraid, then I can come before him, and ask mercy at his hand, and scarce be sensible of sin or grace, or that indeed I am before God. But above all, they are the rare times, when I can go to God as the Publican, sensible of his glorious majesty, sensible of my misery, and bear up, and affectionately cry, "God me merciful to me a sinner."

But again, the Publican, by his confession, sheweth a piece of the highest wisdom that a mortal man can shew ; because, by so doing, he engageth as well as imploreth the grace and mercy of God to save him. You see by the text he imploreth it ; and now I will shew you that he engageth it, and makes himself a sharer in it.

"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper ; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." And

again, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness;" Prov. xxviii. 13; 1 John. i. 9.

First, In the promise of pardon, "he shall have mercy;" he shall have his sins forgiven. As also Solomon prays, that God will forgive them that know their own sores; and they are indeed such as are sensible of the plague of their own heart, 2 Chron. vi. 29, 30; 1 Kings viii. 37, 38. And the reason is, because the sinner is now driven to the farthest point, for confession is the farthest point, and the utmost bound unto which God has appointed the Publican to go, with reference to his work; as it is said of Saul to David, when he was about to give him Michal his daughter to wife, "I desire not any dowry, but an hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to be avenged of the king's enemies."

So says God in this matter, I desire no sacrifices, nor legal righteousness to make thee acceptable to me: "Only acknowledge and confess thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against me," 1 Sam. xviii. 25; Jer. iii. 12, 13. And though this by some may be thought to be a very easy way to come at, and partake of the mercy of God; yet let the sensible sinner try it, and he shall find it one of the hardest things in the world. And there are two things to which man is prone, that makes confession hard:

First, There is a great proneness in us to be partial, and not thorough and plain in our confessions. We are apt to make half confessions; to confess some, and hide some; or else to make feigned confessions, flattering both ourselves, and also God, while we make confession unto him; or else to confess sin, as our own fancies apprehend, and not as the word describes them. These things we are very prone to do; men can confess little sins, while they hide great ones. Men can feign themselves sorry for sin when they are not, or else in their confessions forget to judge of sin by the word. Hence it is said, They turned to God, "not with their whole hearts, but as it were feignedly." "They spake not aright, saying, What have I done?" "They flatter him with their mouth, and lie unto him with their tongues,"

and do their wickedness in the dark, and sin against him with a high hand, and then come to him and "cover the altar with their tears." These things therefore demonstrate the difficulty of sincere confession of sin ; and that to do it as it should, is no such easy thing.

To right confession of sin, several things must go : as,

1. There must be sound conviction for sin upon the spirit : for before a man shall be convinced of the nature, aggravation, and evil of sin, how shall he make godly confession of it ? Now, to convince the soul of sin, the law must be set home upon the conscience by the Spirit of God : "For by the law is the knowledge of sin." And again, "I had not known lust, unless the law had said, Thou shalt not covet ;" Rom. vii. 7. This law, now when it effectually ministereth conviction of sin to the conscience, doth it by putting of life, and strength, and terror into sin. By its working on the conscience, it makes sin revive, "and the strength of sin is the law ;" Rom. vii. ; 1 Cor. xv. It also increaseth and multiplieth sin, both by the revelation of God's anger against the soul, and also by mustering up and calling to view sins committed and forgotten time out of mind. Sin seen in the glass of the law is a terrible thing ; no man can behold it and live. "When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died ;" when it came from God to my conscience, as managed by an almighty arm, then it slew me. And now is the time to confess sin, because now a soul knows what it is, and sees what it is, both in the nature and consequence of it.

2. To a right confession of sin, there must be sound knowledge of God, especially as to his justice, holiness, righteousness, and purity ; wherefore the Publican here begins his confession by calling upon or by the acknowledgement of his Majesty : "God be merciful to me a sinner : " As if he should say, God, O God, O great God, O sin-revenging God, I have sinned against thee, I have broken thy law, I have opposed thy holiness, thy justice, thy law, and thy righteous will. O consuming fire ("for

our God is a consuming fire"), I have justly provoked thee to wrath, and to take vengeance on me for my transgressions. But alas ! how few that make confession of sin have right apprehension of God, unto whom confession of sin doth belong. Alas ! it is easy for men to entertain such apprehensions of God as shall please their own humours, to bear up under the sense of sin, and that shall make their confession rather facile and fantastical, than solid and heart-breaking. The sight and knowledge of the great God is, to sinful man, the most dreadful thing in the world ; which makes confession of sin so rare. Most men confess their sins behind God's back, but few to his face ; and you know there is oftentimes a vast difference in thus doing among men.

3. To the right confession of sin, there must be a deep conviction of the terribleness of the day of judgment. This John the Baptist inserts, where he insinuates, that the Pharisees' want of (sense of, and) the true confession of sin, was because they had not been warned (or had not taken the alarm) to flee from the wrath to come. What dread, terror, or frightful apprehension can there be, where there is no sense of a day of judgment, and of our giving unto God an account for it ? Matth. iii. 7 ; Luke iii. 7.

I say, therefore, to confession of sin, there must be,

(1.) A deep conviction of the certainty of the day of judgment ; namely, that such a day is coming, that such a day shall be. This the apostle insinuates, where he saith, " God commandeth all men, every where, to repent : because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead ;" Acts xvii. 30, 31.

This will give a sense of what the soul must expect at that day for sin, and so will drive to an hearty acknowledgement of it, and strong cries for a deliverance from it. For thus will the soul argue that expecteth the judgment-day, and that believes that it must count for all. O my heart ! it is in vain now to dissemble, or to hide, or to lessen transgressions ; for there is a judgment to come, a day in

which God will judge the secrets of men by his Son ; and at that day he will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will manifest the counsels of the heart. If it must be so then, to what end will it be now to seek to dissemble ? 1 Cor. iv. 5. This also is in the Old Testament urged as an argument to cause youth, and persons of all sizes, to recall themselves to sobriety, and so to confession of their sin to God ; where the Holy Ghost saith ironically, “ Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes : but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.” So again, “ God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil,” Eccles. xi. 9 ; xii. 12, 14.

The certainty of this, I say, must go to the producing of a sincere confession of sin ; and this is intimated by the Publican, who with his confession, addeth, “ God be merciful to me a sinner.” As if he should say, If thou art not merciful to me, thy judgment shall swallow me up : without thy mercy I shall not stand, but fall by the judgment which thou hast appointed.

(2.) As there must be, for the producing of sincere confession of sin, a deep conviction of the certainty, so of the terribleness, of the day of judgment : wherefore the apostle, to put men on repentance, which is sincere confession of sin, saith, “ For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men ;” 2 Cor. v. 10, 11. The terror of the Lord, as we see here, he makes use of, to persuade men to confession of sin, and repentance to God for mercy.

And I am persuaded, that one reason that this day doth so swarm with wanton professors, is, because they have not sound conviction for, nor go to God with sincere confession of, sin : and one cause of that has been, that they

did never seriously fall in with, nor yet sink under either the certainty or terribleness, of the day of judgment.

O the terrors of the Lord ! the amazing face that will be put upon all things before the tribunal of God ! Yea, the terror that will then be read in the face of God, of Christ, of saints and angels, against the ungodly ! Whoso believes and understands it, cannot live without confession of sin to God, and a coming to him for mercy.

“ Mountains, fall upon us, and cover us, and hide us from the face of him that sits upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb ; for the great day of his wrath is come, and who is able to stand ? ” This terror is also signified, where it is said, “ And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the (very) earth and the heaven fled away : and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God : and the books were opened ; and another book was opened, which is the book of life : and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it ; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them : and they were judged every man according to his works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire ; ” Rev. xx. Here is terror ; and this is revealed in the word of God, that sinners might hear and consider it, and so come and confess, and implore God’s mercy.

The terror of the Lord, how will it appear, when he “ shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ ! ” 2 Thess. i. 7-9.

The terror of the Lord, how will it appear, when his wrath shall burn and flame out like an oven or a fiery furnace before him, while the wicked stand in his sight ! Matt. xiii. 50.

The terror of the Lord, how will it appear, while the angels at his command shall gather the wicked to burn them ! “ As the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather together out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire, where there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth ;” Matt. xiii. 40-42. Who can conceive this terror ! much more unable are men to express it with tongue or pen ; yet the truly penitent and sin-confessing Publican hath apprehension so far thereof, by the word of the testimony, that it driveth him to God with a confession of sin for an interest in God’s mercy. But,

4. To right and sincere confession of sin there must be a conviction of a probability of mercy. This also is intimated by the Publican in his confession ; “ God (saith he) be merciful to me a sinner.” He had some glimmerings of mercy, some conviction of a probability of mercy, or that he might obtain mercy for his pardon, if he went and with unfeigned lips did confess his sins to God.

Despair of mercy shuts up the mouth, makes the heart hard, and drives a man away from God ; as is manifest in the case of Adam and the fallen angels. But the least intimation of mercy, if the heart can but touch, feel, taste, or have the least probability of it, that will open the mouth, tend to soften the heart, and to make a very publican come up to God into the temple, and say, “ God be merciful to me a sinner.”

There must then be this holy mixture of things in the heart of a truly confessing publican. There must be sound sense of sin, sound knowledge of God, deep conviction of the certainty and terribleness of the day of judgment, as also of the probability of obtaining mercy. But to come to that which remains ; I told you that there were two things that did make unfeigned confession hard. The first I have touched upon.

Secondly, And now the second follows : and that is, some

private leaning to some goodness a man shall conceit that he hath done before, or is doing now, or that he purposeth to prevail with God for the pardon of sins. This man, to be sure, knows not sin in the nature and evil of it, only he has some false apprehensions about it. For where the right knowledge of sin is in the heart, that man sees so much evil in the least transgressions, as that it would break the back of all the angels of heaven should the great God impute it to them. And he that sees this is far enough off from thinking of doing to mitigate or assuage the rigour of the law, or to make pardonable his own transgressions thereby. But he that sees not this, cannot confess his transgressions aright; for true confession consisteth in the general, in a man's taking to himself his transgressions, with the acknowledgment of them to be his, and that he cannot stir from under them, nor do anything to make amends for them, or to palliate the rigour of justice against the soul. And this the Publican did when he cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

He made his sins his own; he stood before God in them, accounting that he was surely undone for ever, if God did not extend forgiveness unto him. And this is to do as the prophet Jeremiah bids; to wit, only to acknowledge our iniquities, to acknowledge them at the terrible bar of God's justice, until mercy takes them out of the way; not by doing, or promising to do, either this or that good work. And the reason of this kind of confession is,

(1.) Because this carrieth in it the true nature of confession; to confess, and plead for mercy under the crimes confessed, without shifts and evasions, is the only real simple way of confession. "I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord;" and what then? "and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." Mark, nothing comes in betwixt confession and forgiveness of sin, Psalm xxxii. 5; nothing of works of righteousness, nothing of legal amendments, nothing but an outcry for mercy; and that act is so far off from lessening the offence, that it greatly heightens and aggravates it. That is the first reason.

(2.) A second reason is, Because God doth expect that the penitent confessors should not only confess, but bear their shame on them: yea, saith God, "Be thou confounded also, and bear thine own shame:" when God takes away thine iniquity, thou shalt "be confounded, and never open thy mouth more, because of thy shame;" Ezek. xvi. 52, 54, 62, 63. We count it convenient that men, when their crimes and transgressions are to be manifested, that they be set in some open place with a piece paper, wherein their transgressions are inserted, that they may not only confess, but bear their own shame. At the penitential confession of sinners God has something to do; if not before men, yet before angels, that they may behold, and be affected, and rejoice when they shall see, after the revelation of sin, the sinner taken into the favour and abundant mercy of God; Luke xv.

(3.) A third reason is, for that God will, in the forgiveness of sin, magnify the riches of his mercy; but this cannot be, if God shall suffer, or accept of such confession of sin, as is yet intermixed with those things that will darken the heinousness of the offence.

That God, in the salvation, and so in the confession, of the sinner, designs the magnifying of his mercy, is apparent enough from the whole current of scripture; and that any of the things now mentioned will, if suffered to be done, darken and eclipse this thing, is evident to reason itself.

Suppose a man stand indicted for treason, yet shall so order the matter that it shall ring in the country that his offences are but petty crimes; though the king shall forgive this man, much glory shall not thereby redound to the riches and greatness of his mercy. But let all things lie naked, let nothing lie hid or covered, let sin be seen, shewn, and confessed, as it is in the sinner himself, and then there will be in his forgiveness a magnifying of mercy.

(4.) A fourth reason is, for else God cannot be justified in his sayings, nor overcome when he is judged; Psalm

li.; Rom. iii. God's word hath told us what sin is, both as to its nature and evil effects ; God's word hath told us, that the best of our righteousness is no better than filthy rags. God's word has also told us, that sin is forgiven us freely by grace, and not for the sake of our amendments : and all this God shews, not only in the acts of his mercy toward, but even in the humiliations and confessions of, the penitent ; for God will have his mercy to be displayed even there where the sinner hath taken his first step toward him : "That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord ;" Rom. v. 21.

(5.) A fifth reason is, because God would have by the Publican's conversion others affected with the displays and discoveries of wonderful grace, but not to cloud and cover it with lessening of sin.

For what will such say when sin begins to appear to conscience, and when the law shall follow it with a voice of words, each one like a clap of thunder ? I say, what will such say, when they shall read that the Publican did only acknowledge his iniquity, and found grace and favour of God ? That God is infinitely merciful to those or to such as in truth stand in need of mercy. Also, that he sheweth mercy of his own good pleasure, nothing moving him thereto.

I say, this is the way to make others be affected with mercy, as he saith, by the apostle Paul, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved) ; and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus ; that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness to us-ward (or toward us) through Christ Jesus ;" Eph. ii. 4-7. You may also see that 1 Tim. i. 15, 16.

(6.) Another reason of this is, because this is the way to heighten the comfort and consolation of the soul, and that both here and hereafter. What tendeth more to this, than

for sinners to see, and with guilt and amazement to confess, what sin is, and so to have pardon extended from God to the sinner as such? This fills the heart; it ravishes the soul; puts joy into the thoughts of salvation from sin, and deliverance from wrath to come. Now they "return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away;" Isa. xxxv. 10. Indeed, the belief of this makes joy and gladness endless.

(7.) Besides, it layeth upon the soul the greatest obligations to holiness. What like the apprehension of free forgiveness (and that apprehension must come in through a sight of the greatness of sin, and of inability to do any thing towards satisfaction), to engage the heart of a rebel to love his prince, and to submit to his laws?

When Elisha had taken the Syrian captives, some were for using severities towards them; but he said, "Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master;" and they did so. And what follows? "So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel,"—he conquered their malice with his compassion. And it is the love of Christ that constraineth to live to him; 2 Kings vi. 13–23; 2 Cor. v. 14.

Many other things might possibly be urged, but at present let these be sufficient.

The SECOND thing that we made mention of in the Publican's prayer, was an imploring of help against this malady: "God be merciful to me a sinner." In which petition I shall take notice of several things.

First, That a man's help against sin doth not so absolutely lie in his personal conquest as in the pardon of them. I suppose a conquest, though there can indeed by man be none so long as he liveth in this world, I mean, a complete conquest and annihilation of sin.

The Publican, and so every graciously awakened sinner, is doubtless for the subduing of sin; but yet he looketh that the chief help against it doth lie in the pardon of it. Suppose a man should stab his neighbour with his

knife, and afterwards burn his knife to nothing in the fire, would this give him help against his murder ? No, verily, notwithstanding this, his neck is obnoxious to the halter, yea, and his soul to hell-fire. But a pardon gives him absolute help : It is God that justifies ; who shall condemn ? Rom. viii. Suppose a man should live many days in rebellion against God, and after that leave off to live any longer so rebelliously, would this help him against the guilt which he had contracted before ? No, verily ; without remission there is no help, but the rebel is undone. Wherefore the first blessedness, yea, and that without which all other things cannot make one blessed, it lies in pardon. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord will not impute sin ;" Psalm xxxii. ; Rom. iv.

Suppose a man greatly sanctified and made holy ; I say, suppose it : yet if the sins before committed by him be not pardoned, he cannot be a blessed man.

Yet again, suppose a man should be caught up to heaven, not having his sins pardoned ; heaven itself cannot make him a blessed man. I suppose these things—not that they can be—to illustrate my matter. There can be no blessedness upon any man who yet remaineth unforgiven. You see therefore here, that there was much of the wisdom of the Holy Ghost in this prayer of the Publican. He was directed the right, the only, the next way to shelter, where blessedness begins, even to mercy for the pardon of his sins. Alas ! what would it advantage a traitor to be taken up into the king's coach, to be clothed with the king's royal robe, to have put upon his finger the king's gold ring, and to be made to wear, for the present, a chain of gold about his neck, if after all this the king should say unto him, But I will not pardon thy rebellion ; thou shalt die for thy treason ? Pardon, then, to him that loves life, is better, and more to be preferred and sought after, than all other things ; yea, it is the highest wisdom in any sinner to seek after that first.

This therefore confuteth the blindness of some, and the

hypocrisy of others. Some are so silly and so blind as quite to forget and look over the pardon of sin, and to lay their happiness in some external amendments, when, alas ! poor wretches as they are, they abide under the wrath of God. Or if they be not quite so foolish as utterly to forget the forgiveness of sin, yet they think of it but in the second place ; they are for setting of sanctification before justification, and so seek to confound the order of God ; and that which is worse unto them, they by so doing do what they can to keep themselves indeed from being sharers in that great blessing of forgiveness of sins by grace.

But the Publican here was guided by the wisdom of heaven. He comes into the temple, he confesseth himself a sinner, and forthwith, without any delay, before he removeth his foot from where he stands, craves help of pardon ; for he knew that all other things, if he remained in guilt, would not help him against that damnation that belonged to a vile and unforgiven sinner.

This also confuteth the hypocrites, such as is our Pharisee here in the text, that glory in nothing so much as that they are not as other men, not unjust, no adulterer, no extortioner, nor even as this Publican ; and thus miss of the forgiveness of sin ; and if they have missed of the beginning good, they shall never, as so standing, receive the second or the third. Justification, sanctification, glorification, they are the three things, but the order of God must not be perverted. Justification must be first, because that comes to man while he is ungodly and a sinner.

Justification cannot be where God has not passed a pardon. A pardon, then, is the first thing to be looked after by the sinner. This the Pharisee did not ; therefore he went down to his house unjustified ; he set the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face when he went to inquire of the Lord ; and as he neglected, slighted, scorned, because he thought that he had no need of pardon, therefore it was given to the poor, needy, and miserable Publican, and he went away with the blessing.

Publicans, since this is so weighty a point, let me ex-

hort you that you do not forget this prayer of your wise and elder brother, to wit, the Publican that went up into the temple to pray. I say, forget it not, neither suffer any vain-glorious or self-conceited hypocrites with arguments to allure you with their silly and deceitful tongues from this wholesome doctrine. Remember that you are sinners as abominable as the Publican, wherefore do you, as you have him for your pattern, go to God, confess, in all simple, honest, and self-abasing, your numerous and abominable sins ; and be sure that in the very next place you forget not to ask for pardon, saying, " God be merciful to me a sinner." And remember that none but God can help you against, nor keep you from, the damnation and misery that comes by sin.

Secondly, As the Publican imploreth help, so notwithstanding the sentence of the law that is gone out against him, he saith to God, Be merciful to me : and also in that he concludes himself a sinner. I say, he justifieth, he approveth of the sentence of the law, that was now gone out against him, and by which he now stood condemned in his own conscience before the tribunal of God's justice. He saith not as the hypocrite, Because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn from me ; or, What have we spoken so much against thee ? No, he is none of these murmurers or complainers, but fairly falls before the law, witnesses, judge, and jury, and consenteth to the verdict, sentence, and testimony of each of them ; Jer. ii. 36 ; Mal. ii. 13.

To illustrate this a little, suppose a malefactor should be arraigned before a judge, and that after the witnesses, jury, and judge, have all condemned him to death for his fact, the judge again should ask him what he can say for himself why sentence of death should not pass upon him ? Now, if he saith, Nothing, but good my lord, mercy ; he confesseth the indictment, approveth of the verdict of the jury, and consenteth to the judgment of the judge.

The Publican therefore in crying, Mercy, justifieth the sentence of the law that was gone out against his sins. He

wrangleth not with the law, saying, that was too severe ; though many men do thus, saying, " God forbid ; for then woe be to us." He wrangleth not with the witness, which was his own conscience ; though some will buffet, smite, and stop its mouth, or command it to be silent. He wrangleth not with the jury, which were the prophets and apostles ; though some men cannot abide to hear all that they say. He wrangleth not with the judge, nor sheweth himself irreverently before him ; but in all humble gestures that could bespeak him acquiescing with the sentence, he flieth to mercy for relief.

Nor is this alone the way of the Publican ; but of other godly men before his time. When David was condemned, he justified the sentence and the judge, out of whose mouth it proceeded, and so fled for succour to the mercy of God ; Psalm li. When Shemaiah the prophet pronounced God's judgments against the princes of Judah for their sin, they said, " The Lord is righteous." When the church in the Lamentations had reckoned up several of her grievous afflictions wherewith she had been chastised, she, instead of complaining, doth justify the Lord, and approve of the sentence that was passed upon her, saying, " The Lord is righteous ; for I have rebelled against his commandment." So Daniel, after he had enumerated the evils that befel the church in his day, addeth, " Therefore hath the Lord brought it upon us ; for the Lord our God is righteous in all his works which he doth : for we obeyed not his voice ;" 2 Chron. xii. 6 ; Lam. i. 18 ; Dan. ix. 14.

And this is the case with our Publican. He has transgressed a law that is holy, just, and good : the witness that accuseth him of this is God and his conscience ; he is also cast by the verdict of holy men ; and all this he knows, and implicitly confesses, even in that he directs his prayer unto his judge for pardon. And it is one of the excellentest sights in the world, to see or understand a sinner thus honestly receiving the sentence of the law that is gone out against him ; to see and hear a Publican thus to justify God. And this God would have men do for these reasons.

1. That it might be conspicuous to all that the Publican has need of mercy. This is for the glory of the justice of God, because it vindicates it in its goings out against the Publican. God loveth to do things in justice and righteousness, when he goeth out against men, though it be but such a going out against them as only tendeth to their conviction and conversion. When he dealt with our father Abraham in this matter, he called him to his foot, as here he doth the Publican. And, sinner, if God counts thee worthy to inherit the throne of glory, he will bring thee hither. But,

2. The Publican, by the power of conviction, stoops to, and falleth under, the righteous sentence gone forth against him, that it might be also manifest, that what afterward he shall receive is of the mere grace and sovereign goodness of God. And indeed there is no way that doth more naturally tend to make this manifest than this. For thus ; there is a man proceeded against for life by the law, and the sentence of death is, in conclusion, most justly and righteously passed upon him by the judge. Suppose now, that after this, this man lives, and is exalted to honour, enjoys great things, and is put into place of trust and power, and that by him that he has offended, even by him that did pass the sentence upon him.

What will all say, or what will they conclude, even upon the very first hearing of this story ? Will they not say, Well, whoever he was that found himself wrapped up in this strange providence, must thank the mercy of a gracious prince ; for all these things bespeak grace and favour. But,

3. As the Publican falleth willingly under the sentence, and justifieth the passing of it upon him ; so by his flying to mercy for help, he declareth to all that he cannot deliver himself : he putteth help away from himself, or saith, It is not in me.

This, I say, is another thing included in this prayer, and it is a thing distinct from that. For it is possible for a man to justify, and fall under, the sentence of the judge, and yet retain that with himself that will certainly deliver him

from that sentence when it has done its worst. Many have held up their hand, and cried Guilty, at the bar, and yet have fetched themselves off for all that ; but then they have not pleaded mercy (for he that doth so, puts his life altogether into the hands of another), but privilege or good deeds, either done or to be done by them. But the Publican in our text puts all out of his own hand ; and in effect saith to that God before whom he went up into the temple to pray, Lord, I stand here condemned at the bar of thy justice, and that worthily, for the sentence is good, and hath in righteousness gone out against me : nor can I deliver myself : I heartily and freely confess I cannot ; wherefore I betake myself only to thy mercy, and do pray thee to forgive the transgressions of me a sinner. O how few be there of such kind of publicans, I mean of publicans thus made sensible, that come unto God for mercy !

Mercy, with most, is rather a compliment, I mean while they plead it with God, than a matter of absolute necessity ; they have not awfully, and in judgment and conscience, fallen under the sentence, nor put themselves out of all plea but the plea of mercy ; indeed, thus to do is the effect of the proof of the vanity and emptiness of all experiments made use of before.

Now, there is a twofold proof of experiments ; the one is the result of practice, the other is the result of faith.

The woman with her bloody issue made her proof by practice, when she had spent all that she had upon physicians, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse ; Mark v. But our Publican here proves the emptiness and vanity of any other helps, by one cast of faith upon the contents of the Bible, and by another look upon his present state of condemnation ; wherefore he presently, without any more ado, condemneth all other helps, ways, modes, or means of deliverance, and betakes himself only to the mercy of God : saying, " God be merciful to me a sinner."

And herein he sheweth wonderful wisdom. For,

1. By this he thrusts himself under the shelter and blessing of the promise ; and I am sure it is better and safer.

to do so, than to rely upon the best of excellencies that this world can afford : Hos. xiv. 1-3.

2. He takes the ready way to please God : for God takes more delight in shewing of mercy than in any thing that we can do ; Hos. vi. 6 ; Matt. ix. 13 ; xii. 7. Yea, and that also is the man that pleaseth him, even he that hopes in his mercy ; Psalm cxlvii. 11. The Publican, therefore, whatever the Pharisee might think, stood all this while upon sure ground, and had by far the start of him for heaven. Alas ! his dull head could look no further than to the conceit of the pitiful beauty and splendour of his own filthy righteousness. Nor durst he leave that to trust wholly to the mercy of God ; but the Publican comes out, though in his sins, yet like an awakened, enlightened, resolved man, and first abases himself, then gives God the glory of his justice, and after that the glory of his mercy, by saying, " God be merciful to me a sinner ;" and thus in the ears of the angels he did ring the changes of heaven. And,

3. The Publican, in his thus putting himself upon mercy, sheweth, that in his opinion there is more virtue in mercy to save, than there is in the law and sin to condemn. And although this is not counted a great matter to do, while men are far from the law, and while their conscience is asleep within them ; yet when the law comes near, and conscience is awake, who so tries it will find it a laborious work. Cain could not do thus for his heart, no, nor Saul ; nor Judas either. This is another kind of thing than most men think it to be, or shall find it, whenever they shall behold God's angry face, and when they shall hear the words of his law.

However, our Publican did it, and ventured his body, soul, and future condition for ever on this bottom with other the saints and servants of God, leaving the world to swim over the sea of God's wrath (if they will) in their weak and simple vessels of bulrushes, or to lean upon their cobweb-hold, when he shall arise to the judgment that he hath appointed.

In the mean time, pray God awaken us as he did the Publican ; pray God enlighten us as he did the Publican ; pray God grant us boldness to come to him as the Publican did ; and also in that trembling spirit as he did, when he cried in the temple before him, " God be merciful to me a sinner."

Thus having passed over his prayer, we come in the next place to his GESTURES ; for in my judgment the right understanding of them will give us yet more conviction of the Publican's sense and awakening of spirit under this present action of his.

And I have observed many a poor wretch that hath readily had recourse to the Publican's prayer, that never knew what the Publican's gestures, in the presence of God, while in prayer before him, did mean. Nor must any man be admitted to think, that those gestures of his were a custom, and a formality among the Jews in those days ; for it is evident enough by the carriage of the Pharisee, that it was below them and their mode, when they came into the temple, or when they prayed any where else ; and they in those days were counted for the best of men ; and in religious matters men were to imitate and take their examples at the hands of the best, not at the hands of the worst.

The Publican's gestures then were properly his own ; caused by the guilt of sin, and by that dread of the majesty of God that was upon his spirit. And a comely posture it was, else Christ Jesus, the Son of God, would never have taken that particular notice thereof as he did, nor have smiled upon it so much as to take, and distinctly repeat it, as that which made his prayer the more weighty, also to be taken notice of. Yea, in my opinion, the Lord Jesus committed it to record, for that he liked it, and for that it will pass for some kind of touchstone of prayer that is made in good sense of sin and of God, and of need of his goodness and mercy. For verily, all these postures signify sense, sight of a lost condition, and a heart in good earnest for mercy.

I know that they may be counterfeited, and Christ Jesus knows who doth so too ; but that will not hinder, or make weak or invalid what hath already been spoken about it. But to forbear to make a further prologue, and to come to the handling of particulars :

“ And the Publican standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast,” &c.

Three things, as I told you already, we may perceive in these words, by which his publican posture or gestures are set forth.

1. He stands “ afar off.”
2. He “ would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven.”
3. He “ smote upon his breast,” &c.

For the first of these, He stood afar off. “ And the Publican standing afar off.” This is, I say, the first thing, the first posture of his with which we are acquainted, and it informeth us of several things.

First, That he came not with senselessness of the majesty of God when he came to pray, as the Pharisee did, and as sinners commonly do. For this standing back, or afar off, declares, that the majesty of God had an awe upon his spirit ; he saw whither, to whom, and for what, he was now approaching the temple. It is said in the 20th of Exodus, that when the people saw the thunderings and lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking (and all these were signs of God’s terrible presence and dreadful majesty), they removed themselves, and “ stood afar off ;” Exod. xx. 18. This behaviour, therefore, of the Publican did well become his present action, especially since, in his own eyes, he was yet an unforgiven sinner. Alas ! what is God’s majesty to a sinful man but a consuming fire ? And what is a sinful man in himself, or in his approach to God, but as stubble fully dry ?

How then could the Publican do otherwise (than what he did) than stand afar off, if he either thought of God or himself ? Indeed the people afore named, before they saw God in his terrible majesty, could scarcely be kept off from

the mount with words and bounds, as it is now the case of many : their blindness gives them boldness ; their rudeness gives them confidence ; but when they shall see what the Publican saw, and felt, and understood, as he, they will pray and stand afar off, even as these people did. They removed and stood afar off, and then fell to praying of Moses, that this dreadful sight and sound might be taken from them. And what if I should say, he stood afar off for fear of a blow, though he came for mercy, as it is said of them, " They stood afar off for fear of her torments ;" Rev. xviii. 10, 18.

I know what it is to go to God for mercy, and stand all that while through fear afar off ; being possessed with this, will not God now smite me at once to the ground for my sins ? David thought something when he said as he prayed, " Cast me not away from thy presence ; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me ;" Psalm li. 11.

There is none knows, but those that have them, what turns and returns, what coming on and going off, there is in the spirit of a man that indeed is awakened, and that stands awakened before the glorious Majesty in prayer. The prodigal also made his prayer to his Father intentionally, while he was yet a great way off. And so did the lepers too : " And as he entered into a certain village there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off : and they lifted up their voices and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us ;" Luke xvii. 12, 13.

See here, it has been the custom of praying men to keep their distance, and not to be rudely bold in rushing into the presence of the holy and heavenly Majesty, especially if they have been sensible of their own vileness and sins, as the prodigal, the lepers, and our poor Publican was. Yea, Peter himself, when upon a time he perceived more than commonly he did of the majesty of Jesus his Lord, what doth he do ? " When Simon Peter saw it (says the text), he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord ;" Luke v. 3-8. Oh ! when men see God and themselves, it fills them

with holy fear of the greatness of the majesty of God, as well as with love to, and desire after, his mercy.

Besides, by his standing afar off, it might be to intimate that he now had in mind, and with great weight upon his conscience, the infinite distance that was betwixt God and him. Men should know that, and tremble in the thoughts of it, when they are about to approach the omnipotent presence.

What is poor sorry man, poor dust and ashes, that he should crowd it up, and go jostlingly into the presence of the great God—especially since it is apparent the disproportion that is betwixt God and him? Esther, when she went to supplicate the king her husband for her people, made use neither of her beauty nor relation, nor the privileges of which she might have had temptation to make use of, especially at such a time, and in such exigencies, as then did compass her about; but, I say, she made not use of them to thrust herself into his presence, but knew, and kept her distance, standing in the inward court of his palace until he held out the golden sceptre to her; then Esther drew near, and touched the top thereof; *Esth.* v. 1, 2.

Men, also, when they come into the presence of God, should know their distance; yea, and shew that they know it too, by such gestures, and carriages, and behaviour, that are seemly. A remarkable saying is that of Solomon, "Keep thy foot," saith he, "when thou goest into the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools; for they consider not that they do evil." And as they should keep their foot, so also he adds, "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God; for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth, therefore let thy words be few;" *Eccles.* v. 1, 2.

Three things the Holy Ghost exhorteth to in this text.

The one is, That we look to our feet, and not be forward to crowd into God's presence.

Another is, That we should also look well to our tongues, that they be not rash in uttering any thing before God.

And the third is, Because of the infinite distance that is betwixt God and us, which is intimated by these words, "For God is in heaven, and thou upon earth."

The Publican therefore shewed great wisdom, holy shame, and humility, in this brave gesture of his, namely, in his standing afar off when he went up into the temple to pray. But this is not all.

Secondly, The Publican, in standing afar off, left room for an Advocate and High-priest, a Day's-man, to come betwixt, to make peace between God and his poor creature. Moses, the great mediator of the Old Testament, was to go nigher to God than the rest of the elders, or those of the people; Exod. xx. 21. Yea, the rest of the people were expressly commanded to worship, "standing afar off." No man of the sons of Aaron that had a blemish was to come nigh. "No man that hath a blemish of the seed of Aaron the priest shall come nigh to offer the offerings of the Lord made by fire. He shall not come nigh to offer the bread of his God;" Lev. xxi. 21.

The Publican durst not be his own mediator; he knew he had a blemish, and was infirm, and therefore he stands back; for he knew that it was none of him that his God had chosen to come near unto him, to offer "the fat and the blood;" Ezek. xlv. 13-15. The Publican, therefore, was thus far right; he took not up the room himself, neither with his person nor his performances, but stood back, and gave place to the High-priest that was to be intercessor.

We read, that when Zacharias went into the temple to burn incense, as at the time his lot was, "The whole multitude of the people were praying without;" Luke i. 9, 10. They left him where he was, near to God, between God and them, mediating for them; for the offering of incense by the chief-priest was a figurative making of intercession for the people, and they maintained their distance.

It is a great matter in praying to God, not to go too far, nor come too short, in that duty, I mean in the duty of prayer; and a man is very apt to do one or the other. The Pharisee

went so far ; he was too bold ; he came into the temple making such a ruffle with his own excellencies, that there was in his thoughts no need of a Mediator. He also went up so nigh to God, that he took up the room and place of the Mediator himself ; but this poor Publican, he knows his distance, and keeps it, and leaves room for the High-priest to come and intercede for him with God. He stood afar off : not too far off ; for that is the room and place of unbelievers ; and in that sense this saying is true, "For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish ;" Psalm lxxiii. 27 ; that is, they whose unbelief hath set their hearts and affections more upon their idols, and that have been made to cast God behind their backs, to follow and go a-whoring after them.

Hitherto, therefore, it appears, that though the Pharisee had more righteousness than the Publican, yet the Publican had more spiritual righteousness than the Pharisee ; and that though the Publican had a baser and more ugly outside than the Pharisee, yet the Publican knew how to prevail with God for mercy better than he.

As for the Publican's posture of standing in prayer, it is excusable, and that by the very Father of the faithful himself : for Abraham stood praying when he made intercession for Sodom ; Gen. xviii. 22, 23. Christ also alloweth it, where he saith, "And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any ; that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses ;" Mark xi. 25. Indeed there is no stinted order prescribed for our thus behaving of ourselves in prayer, whether kneeling, or standing, or walking, or lying, or sitting ; for all these postures have been used by the godly. Paul "kneeled down and prayed ;" Acts xx. 36. Abraham and the Publican stood and prayed. David prayed as he walked ; 2 Sam. xv. 30, 31. Abraham prayed lying upon his face ; Gen. xvii. 17, 18. Moses prayed sitting ; Exod. xvii. 12. And indeed prayer, effectual fervent prayer, may be, and often is, made unto God under all these circumstances of behaviour : for God has not tied us up to any of them ; and he that shall tie

himself, or his people, to any of these, doth more than he hath warrant for from God: and let such take care of innovating; it is the next way to make men hypocrites and dissemblers in those duties in which they should be sincere.

True, which of those soever a man shall choose to himself for the present, to perform this solemn duty in, it is required of him, and Gods expects it, that he should pray to him in truth, and with desire, affection, and hunger, after those things that with his tongue he maketh mention of before the throne of God. And indeed without this, all is nothing. But alas! how few be there in the world whose heart and mouth in prayer shall go together? Dost thou, when thou askest for the Spirit, or faith, or love to God, to holiness, to saints, to the word, and the like, ask for them with love to them, desire of them, hungering after them? Oh! this is a mighty thing! and yet prayer is no more before God, than as it is seasoned with these blessed qualifications. Wherefore it is said, that while men are praying, God is searching of the heart, to see what is the meaning of the Spirit (or whether there be the Spirit and his meaning in all that the mouth hath uttered, either by words, sighs, or groans), because it is by him, and through his help only, that any make prayers according to the will of God; Rom. viii. 26, 27. Whatever thy posture therefore shall be, see that thy prayers be pertinent and fervent, not mocking of thine own soul with words, while thou wantest, and art an utter stranger to, the very vital and living spirit of prayer.

Now, our Publican had and did exercise the very spirit of prayer in prayer. He prayed sensibly, seriously, affectionately, hungering, thirsting, and with longing after that for which with his mouth he implored the God of heaven; his heart and soul was in his words, and it was that which made his prayer PRAYER; even because he prayed in PRAYER; he prayed inwardly as well as outwardly.

David tells us, that God heard the voice of his supplication, the voice of his cry, the voice of his tears, and the

voice of his roaring. For indeed are all these acceptable. Affection and fervent desire make them sound well in the ears of God. Tears, supplications, prayers, cries, may be all of them done in formality, hypocrisy, and from other causes, and to other ends, than that which is honest and right in God's sight: for God would search and look after the voice of his tears, supplications, roarings, prayers, and cries.

And if men had less care to please men, and more to please God, in the matter and manner of praying, the world would be at a better pass than it is. But this is not in man's power to help and to amend. When the Holy Ghost comes upon men with great conviction of their state and condition, and of the use and excellency of the grace of sincerity and humility in prayer, then, and not till then, will the grace of prayer be more prized, and the specious, flouting, complimentary lips of flatterers, be more laid aside. I have said it already, and will say it again, that there is now-a-days a great deal of wickedness committed in the very duty of prayer; by words of which men have no sense by reaching after such conclusion and clenshes therein, as make their persons be admired; by studying for, and labouring after, such enlargements as the spirit accompanieth not the heart in. O Lord God, make our hearts upright in us, as in all points and parts of our profession, so in this solemn appointment of God! "If I regard iniquity in my heart," said David, "the Lord will not hear my prayer." But if I be truly sincere, he will; and then it is no matter whether I kneel, or stand, or sit, or lie, or walk; for I shall do none of these, nor put up my prayers under any of these circumstances, lightly, foolishly, and idly, but to beautify this gesture with the inward working of my mind and spirit in prayer; that whether I stand or sit, walk or lie down, grace and gravity, humility and sincerity, shall make my prayer profitable, and my outward behaviour comely in his eyes, with whom (in prayer) I now have to do.

And had not our Publican been inwardly seasoned with

these, Christ would have taken but little pleasure in his modes and outward behaviour: but being so honest inwardly, and in the matter of his prayer, his gestures by that were made beauteous also; and therefore it is that our Lord so delightfully delateth upon them, and draweth them out at length before the eyes of others.

I have often observed, that which is natural and so comely in one, looks odiously when imitated by another. I speak as to gestures and actions in preaching and prayer. Many, I doubt not, but will imitate the Publican, and that both in the prayer and gestures of the Publican, whose persons and actions will yet stink in the nostrils of him that is holy and just, and that searcheth the heart and the reins.

Well, the Publican stood and prayed; he stood afar off, and prayed, and his prayers came even to the ears of God.

“And the Publican standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven,” &c.

We are now come to another of his postures. He would not, says the text, so much as lift up his eyes to heaven. Here, therefore, was another gesture added to that which went before; and a gesture that a great while before had been condemned by the Holy Ghost himself. “Is it such a fast that I have chosen, a day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush?” Isa. lviii. 5.

But why condemned then, and smiled upon now? Why? Because done in hypocrisy then, and in sincerity now. Hypocrisy, and a spirit of error, that he shall take no pleasure in them; but sincerity, and honesty in duties, will make even them comely in the sight of men—may I not say before God? The Rechabites were not commanded of God, but of their father, to do as they did; but, because they were sincere in their obedience thereto, even God himself maketh use of what they did, to condemn the disobedience of the Jews; and, moreover, doth tell the Rechabites at last, that they should not want a man to stand before him for

ever. "And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according unto all that he hath commanded you ; therefore, thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, Jonadab, the son of Rechab, shall not want a man to stand before me for ever."

He would not lift up his eyes to heaven. Why ? Surely because shame had covered his face. Shame will make a man blush and hang his head like a bulrush ; shame for sin is a virtue, a comely thing ; yea, a beauty-spot in the face of a sinner that cometh to God for mercy.

God complains of the house of Israel, that they could sin, and that without shame ; yea, and threateneth them too with sore repeated judgments, because they were not ashamed ; it is in Jer. viii. Their crimes in general were, they turned every one to his course, as the horse runneth into the battle. In particular, they were such as rejected God's word ; they loved this world, and set themselves against the prophets, crying, "Peace, peace," when they cried, "Judgment, judgment !" And were not ashamed when they had committed abomination ; "Nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush ; therefore shall they fall among them that fall : in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down, saith the Lord ;" ver. 12. Oh ! to stand, or sit, or lie, or kneel, or walk before God in prayer, with blushing cheeks for sin, is one of the most excellent sights that can be seen in the world.

Wherefore the church taketh some kind of heart to herself in that she could lie down in her shame ; yea, and makes that a kind of an argument with God to prove that her prayers did come from her heart, and also that he would hear them ; Jer. iii. 22-25.

Shame for sin argueth sense of sin, yea, a right sense of sin, a godly sense of sin. Ephraim pleads this when under the hand of God : I was (saith he) "ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth." But what follows ? "Is Ephraim my dear

son ? is he a pleasant child ? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still : therefore my bowels are troubled for him : I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord ;” Jer. xxxi. 19, 20.

I know that there is a shame that is not the spirit of an honest heart, but that rather floweth from sudden surprisal, when the sinner is unawares taken in the act—in the very manner. And thus sometimes the house of Israel were taken : and then, when they blushed, their shame is compared to the shame of a thief. “ As the thief is ashamed when he is found, so is the house of Israel ashamed ; they, their kings, their princes, and their priests, and their prophets.”

But where were they taken, or about what were they found ? Why, they were found “ saying to a stock, Thou art my father, and to a stone, thou hast brought me forth.” God caught them thus doing ; and this made them ashamed, even as the thief is ashamed when the owner doth catch him stealing his horse.

But this was not the Publican’s shame. This shame brings not a man into the temple to pray, to stand willingly, and to take shame before God in prayer. This shame makes one rather to fly from his face, and to count one’s self most at ease when farthest off from God ; Jer. ii. 26, 27.

The Publican’s shame, therefore, which he demonstrated by hanging down his head, was godly and holy, and much like that of the prodigal, when he said, “ Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son ;” Luke xv. 21. I suppose that his postures were much the same with the Publican’s, as were his prayers, for the substance of them. O however grace did work in both to the same end ! they were both of them, after a godly manner, ashamed of their sins.

“ He would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven.”

He could not, he would not : which yet more fully makes it appear, that it was shame, not guilt only, or chiefly, though it is manifest enough that he had guilt ; by his

crying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." I say, guilt was not the chief cause of hanging down his head, because it saith, he *would* not ; for when guilt is the cause of stooping, it lieth not in the will, or in the power thereof, to help one up.

David tells us, that when he was under guilt, his iniquities were gone over his head : as an heavy burden, they were too heavy for him ; and that with them he was bowed down greatly. Or, as he says in another place, "Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up ;" Psalm xxxviii. ; xl. I am not able to do it : guilt disableth the understanding and conscience ; shame makes all willingly fall at the feet of Christ.

He would not. He knew what he was, what he had been, and should be, if God had not mercy upon him ; yea, he knew also that God knew what he was, had been, and would be, if mercy prevented not ; wherefore, thought he, Wherefore should I lift up the head ? I am no righteous man, no godly man, I have not served God, but Satan ; this I know, this God knows, this angels know, wherefore I will not lift up the head. It is as much as to say, I will not be an hypocrite, like the Pharisee : for lifting up of the head signifies innocency and harmlessness of life, or good conscience, and the testimony thereof, under and in the midst of all accusations. Wherefore this was the counsel of Zophar to Job—"If," saith he, "thou prepare thine heart, and stretch out thine hand towards him ; if iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles. For then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot ; yea, thou shalt be steadfast, and shalt not fear ;" Job xi. 13-15.

This was not the Publican's state : he had lived in lewdness and villany all his days ; nor had he prepared his heart to seek the Lord God of his fathers ; he had not cleansed his heart nor hands from violence, nor done that which was lawful and right. He only had been convinced of his evil ways, and was come into the temple as he was, all foul, and in his filthy garments, and amidst his pollutions ; how then

could he be innocent, holy, or without spot ? and, consequently, how could he lift up his face to God ? I remember what Abner said to Asahel, "Turn thee aside (said he) from following me, wherefore should I smite thee to the ground ? how then should I hold up my face to Joab, thy brother ?" 2 Sam. ii. 22.

As if he had said, If I kill thee, I shall blush, be ashamed, and hang my head like a bulrush the next time I come into the company of thy brother.

This was the Publican's case : he was guilty, he had sinned, he had committed a trespass ; and now being come into the temple, into the presence of that God whose laws he had broken, and against whom he had sinned, how could he lift up his head ? how could he do it ? No, it better became him to take his shame, and to hang his head in token of guilt ; and indeed he did, and did it to purpose too, for he would not lift up, no not so much as his eyes to heaven.

True, some would have done it ; the Pharisee did it ; though if he had considered that hypocrisy and the leaning to his own righteousness had been a sin, he would have found as little cause to have done it as did the Publican himself. But, I say he did it, and sped therein ; he went down to his house, as he came up into the temple, a poor unjustified Pharisee, whose person and prayer were both rejected ; because, like the whore of whom we read in the Proverbs, after he had practised all manner of hypocrisy, he comes into the temple and wipes his mouth, and saith, "I have done no wickedness;" Prov. xxx. 20. He lifts up his head, his face, his eyes, to heaven ; he struts, he vaunts himself ; he swaggers, he vapours, and cries up himself, saying, "God I thank thee that I am not as other men are."

True, had he come and stood before a stock or stone, he might have said thus, and not have been reprehended ; for such are gods that see not, nor hear, neither do they understand. But to come before the true God, the living God, the God that fills heaven and earth by his presence, and

that knows the things that come into the mind of man, even every one of them; I say, to come into his house, to stand before him, and thus to lift up his head and eyes in such hypocrisy before him, this was abominable, this was to tempt God, and to prove him, yea, to challenge him to know what was in man, if he could, even as those who said, "How doth God (see) know? can he judge through the dark cloud?" Job xxii. 13; Psalm lxxiii. 11.

But the Publican—no—he would not do this; he would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven. As who should say, O Lord, I have been against thee a traitor and a rebel, and like a traitor and a rebel before thee will I stand. I will bear my shame before thee in the presence of the holy angels; yea, I will prevent thy judging of me by judging myself in thy sight, and will stand as condemned before thee before thou passest sentence upon me.

This is now for a sinner to go to the end of things. For what is God's design in the work of conviction for sin, and in his awakening of the conscience about it? What is his end, I say, but to make the sinner sensible of what he hath done, and that he might unfeignedly judge himself for the same. Now this our Publican doth; his will therefore is now subjected to the word of God, and he justifies him in all his ways and works towards him. Blessed be God for any experience of these things.

"He would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven." He knew by his deeds and deservings that he had no portion there; nor would he divert his mind from the remembering, and from being affected with the evil of his ways.

Some men, when they are under the guilt and conviction of their evil life, will do what they can to look any way, and that on purpose to divert their minds, and to call them off from thinking on what they have done; and by their thus doing, they bring many evils more upon their souls; for this is a kind of striving with God, and a shewing a dislike to his ways. Would not you think, if when you are shewing your son or your servant his faults, if he should do what he could to divert and take off his mind

from what you are saying, that he striveth against you, and sheweth dislike of your doings? What else mean the complaints of masters and of fathers in this matter? "I have a servant, I have a son, that doth contrary to my will." "O but why do you not chide them for it?" The answer is, "So I do; but they do not regard my words; they do what they can, even while I am speaking, to divert their minds from my words and counsels." Why, all men will cry out, "This is base; this is worthy of great rebuke; such a son, such a servant, deserveth to be shut out of doors, and so made to learn better breeding by want and hardship."

But the Publican would not divert his mind from what at present God was about to make him sensible of, no, not by a look on the choicest object; he would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven. They are but bad scholars whose eyes, when their master is teaching of them, are wandering off their books.

God saith unto men, when he is teaching them to know the evil of their ways, as the angel said to the prophet when he came to shew him the pattern of the temple, "Son of man," says he, "behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, and set thine heart upon all that I shall shew thee; for to the intent that I might shew them unto thee art thou brought hither;" Ezek. xl. 4. So to the intent that God might shew to the Publican the evil of his ways, therefore was he brought under the power of convictions, and the terrors of the law; and he also, like a good learner, gave good heed unto that lesson that now he was learning of God; for he would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven.

Looking downwards doth oftentimes bespeak men very ponderous and deep in their cogitations; also that the matter about which in their minds they are now concerned hath taken great hold of their spirits. The Publican hath now new things, great things, and long-lived things, to concern himself about: his sins, the curse, with death, and hell, began now to stare him in the face: wherefore it was no time

now to let his heart, or his eyes, or his cogitations, wander, but to be fixed, and to be vehemently applying of himself (as a sinner) to the God of heaven for mercy.

Few know the weight of sin. When the guilt thereof takes hold of the conscience, it commands homewards all the faculties of the soul. No man can go out or off now : now he is wind-bound, or, as Paul says, "caught : " now he is made to possess bitter days, bitter nights, bitter hours, bitter thoughts ; nor can he shift them, for his sin is ever before him. As David said, " For I acknowledge my transgressions : and my sin is ever before me,"—in my eye, and sticketh fast in every one of my thoughts ; Psalm li. 3.

" He would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast." This was the third and last of his gestures ; he " Smote upon his breast," to wit, with his hand, or with his fist. I read of several gestures with the hand and foot, according to the working and passions of the mind. It is said, " Balak smote his hands together," being angry because that Balaam had blessed and not cursed for him the children of Israel.

God says also, that he had smitten his hands together at the sins of the children of Israel. God also bids the prophet stamp with his feet, and smite with his hand upon his thigh (Num. xxiv. 10 ; Ezek. xxii. 13 ; vi. 11 ; xxi. 12), upon sundry occasions, and at several enormities ; but the Publican here is said to smite upon his breast. And,

1. Smiting upon the breast betokeneth sorrow for something done. This is an experiment common among men ; and indeed, therefore (as I take it), doth our Lord Jesus put him under this gesture in the act and exercise of his repentance, because it is that which doth most lively set it forth.

Suppose a man comes to great damage for some folly that he has wrought, and he be made sorrowful for (being and) doing such folly, there is nothing more common than for such a man (if he may) to walk to and fro in the room where he is, with head hung down, fetching ever and anon

a bitter sigh, and smiting himself upon the breast in his dejected condition: "But smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner."

2. Smiting upon the breast is sometimes a token of indignation and abhorrence of something thought upon. I read in Luke, that when Christ was crucified, those spectators that stood to behold the barbarous usage that he endured at the hands of his enemies, smote their breasts and returned. "And all the people (says Luke) that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts and returned;" Luke xxiii. 48. Smote their breasts; that is, in token of indignation against, and abhorrence of, the cruelty that was used to the Son of God.

Here also we have our Publican smiting upon his breast in token of indignation against, and abhorrence of, his former life; and indeed, without indignation against, and abhorrence of, his former life, his repentance had not been good. Wherefore the apostle doth make indignation against sin, and against ourselves, one of the signs of true repentance; 2 Cor. vii. 11; and his indignation against sin in general, and against his former life in particular, was manifested by his smiting upon the breast, even as Ephraim's smiting upon the thigh was a sign and token of his: "Surely (says he), after that I was turned, I repented: and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth;" Jer. xxxi. 19. Man, when he vehemently dislikes a thing, is very apt to shew a dislike to that thing by this or another outward gesture; as in snuffing or snorting at it, or in deriding; or, as some say, in blowing of their noses at it; Ezek. viii. 17; Mal. i. 13. But the Publican here chooseth rather to use this most solemn posture; for smiting upon the breast seems to imply a more serious, solemn, grave way or manner of dislike, than any of those last mentioned do.

3. Smiting upon the breast seems to intimate a quarrel with the heart, for beguiling, deluding, flattering, seducing,

and enticing of him to sin ; for as conviction for sin begets in man (I mean if it be thorough) a sense of the sore and plague of the heart, so repentance (if it be right) begets in man an outcry against the heart ; forasmuch as by that light, by which repentance takes occasion, the sinner is made to see that the heart is the fountain and well-spring of sin. " For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, covetousness," &c. ; Mark vii. 21-23. And hence it is that commonly young converts do complain so of their hearts, calling them wicked, treacherous, deceitful, desperate ones.

Indeed, one difference between true and false repentance lieth in this. The man that truly repents crieth out of his heart ; but the other, as Eve, upon the serpent, or something else. And that the Publican perceived his heart to be naught, I conclude, by his smiting upon his breast.

4. Smiting upon the breast seems to intimate one apprehensive of some new, sudden, strange, and amazing thing ; as when a man sees some strange sight in the air, or heareth some sudden or dismal sound in the clouds ; why, as he is struck into a deep damp in his mind, so it is a wonder if he can keep or hold back from smiting upon his breast.

Now, oftentimes a sight of God and sense of sin comes to the sinner like a flash of lightning (not for short continuance, but) for suddenness, and so for surprisal ; so that the sinner is struck, taken and captivated to his own amazement, with what so unexpectedly is come upon him. It is said of Paul at his conversion, that when conviction of his bad life took fast hold of his conscience, he trembled, and was astonished (Acts ix. 6) ; and although we read not of any particular circumstance of his behaviour under his conviction outwardly, yet it is almost impossible but he must have had some, and those of the most solid sort. For there is such a sympathy betwixt the soul and the body, that the one cannot be in distress or comfort, but the other must partake of and also signify the same. If it be comfort, then it is shewn by leaping, skipping, cheerfulness of the coun-

tenance, or some other outward gesture. If it be sorrow or heaviness of spirit, then that is shewed by the body, in weeping, sighing, groaning, shaking of the head, a louring countenance, stamping, smiting upon the thigh or breast, as here the Publican did.

We must not, therefore, look upon these outward actions or gestures of the Publican to be empty, insignificant things; but to be such, that in truth did express and shew the temper, frame, and complexion of his soul. For Christ, the wisdom of God, hath mentioned them to that very end, that in and by them might be held forth, and that men might see as in a glass, the very emblem of a converted and truly penitent sinner. He "smote upon his breast."

5. Smiting upon the breast is sometimes to signify a mixture of distrust, joined with hope. And, indeed, in young converts, hope and distrust, or a degree of despair, do work and answer one another, as doth the noise of the balance of the watch in the pocket. Life and death is always the motion of the mind then, and this noise continues until faith is stronger grown, and until the soul is better acquainted with the methods and ways of God with a sinner. Yea, were but a carnal man in a convert's heart, and could see, he could discern these two, to wit, hope and fear, to have continual motion in the soul; wrestling and opposing one another, as doth light and darkness in striving for the victory.

And hence it is that you find such people so fickle and uncertain in their spirits; now on the mount, then in the valleys; now in the sunshine, then in the shade; now warm, then frozen; now bonny and blithe, then in a moment pensive and sad, as thinking of a portion nowhere but in hell. This will cause smiting on the breast; nor can I imagine that the Publican was as yet farther than thus far in the Christian's progress.

6. Smiting upon the breast seems to intimate, that the party so doing is very apprehensive of some great loss that he has sustained, either by negligence, carelessness, foolishness, or the like. And this is the way in which men do

lose their souls. Now, to lose a thing, a great thing, the only choice thing that a man has, negligently, carelessly, foolishly, or the like, why, it puts aggravations into the thoughts of the loss that the man has sustained, and aggravations into the thoughts of them go out of the soul, and come in upon a sudden, even as the bailiff, or the king's serjeant-at-arms, and at every appearance of them, makes the soul start; and starting, it smites upon the breast.

I might multiply particulars; but to be brief, we have before us a sensible soul, a sorrowful soul, a penitent soul; one that prays indeed, that prays sensibly, affectionately, effectually; one that sees his loss, that fears and trembles before God in consideration of it, and one that knows no way but the right way, to secure himself from perishing, to wit, by having humble and hearty recourse to the God of heaven for mercy.

I should now come to speak something by way of use and application: but before I do that, I will briefly draw up, and present you with a few conclusions that in my judgment do naturally flow from the text; therefore in this place I will read over the text again.

"Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, the other a Publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this Publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the Publican standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner."

From these words I gather these several conclusions, with these inferences.

1. It doth not always follow, that they that pray do know God, or love him, or trust in him. This conclusion is evident by the Pharisee in the text; he prayed, but he knew not God, he loved not God, he trusted not in God; that is, he knew him not in his Son, nor loved, nor trusted in him. He was, though a praying man, far off from this.

Whence it may be inferred, that those that pray not at all cannot be good, cannot know, love, or trust in God. For if the star, though it shine, is not the sun, then surely a clod of dirt cannot be the sun. Why, a praying man doth as far outstrip a non-praying man as a star outstrips a clod of earth. A non-praying man lives like a beast. "The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but this man doth not know, but this man doth not consider;" Isa. i. 3. The prayerless man is therefore of no religion, except he be an Atheist, or an Epicurean. Therefore the non-praying man is numbered among the heathens, and among those that know not God, and is appointed and designed by the sentence of the word to the fearful wrath of God; Psal. lxxix. 6; Jer. x. 25.

2. A second conclusion is, That the man that prays, if in his prayer he pleads for acceptance, either in whole or in part, for his own good deeds, is in a miserable state. This also is gathered from the Pharisee here; he prayed, but in this prayer he pleaded his own good deeds for acceptance, that is, of his person, and therefore went down to his house unjustified. And he is in this condition that doth thus. The conclusion is true, forasmuch as the Pharisee mentioned in the parable is not so spoken of for the sake of that sect of men, but to caution, forewarn, and bid all men take heed, that they by doing as he, procure not their rejection of God, and be sent away from his presence unjustified. I do therefore infer from hence, that if he that pleadeth his own good doing for personal acceptance with God be thus miserable, then he that teacheth men so to do is much more miserable.

We always conclude, that a ring-leader in an evil way is more blame-worthy than those that are led of him. This falls hard upon the leading Socinians and others, who teach that men's works make their persons accepted of God.

True, they say, through Christ; but that is brought in merely to delude the simple with, and is an horrible lie; for we read not in all the word of God as to personal justification in the sight of God from the curse (and that is the

question under consideration), that it must be by man's righteousness as made prevalent by Christ's, but contrariwise, by his and his only, without the deeds, works, or righteousness of the law, which is our righteousness. Wherefore, I say, the teachers and leaders of this doctrine have the greater sin.

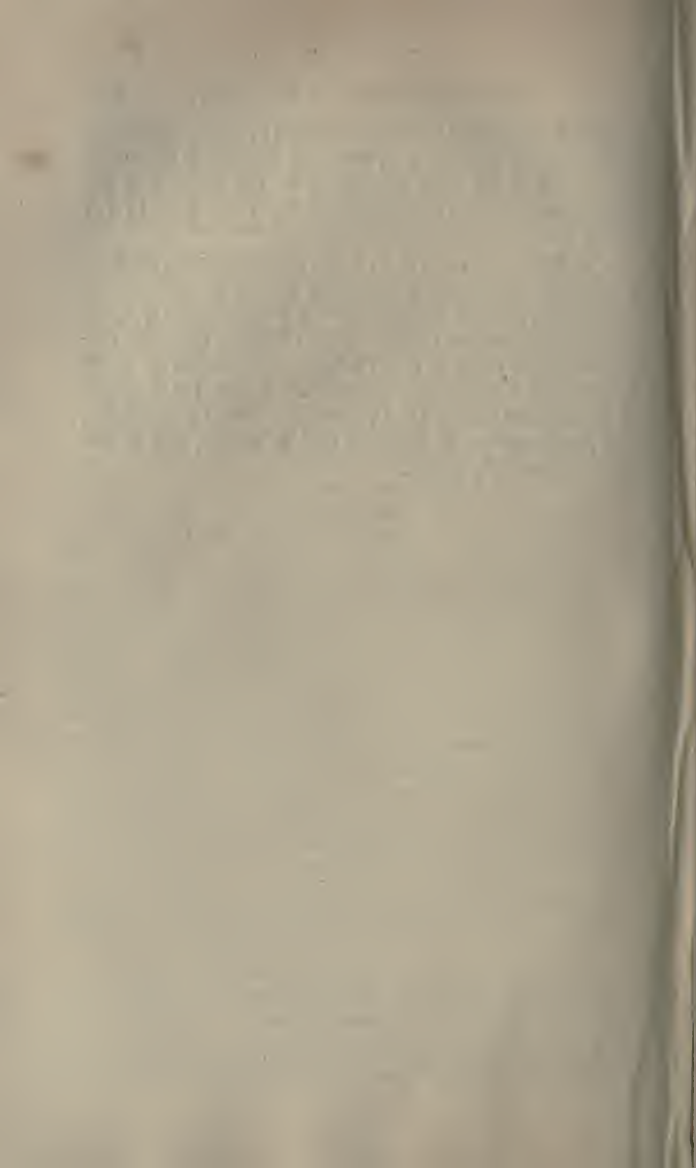
3. A third conclusion is, They that use high and flaunting language in prayer, their simplicity and godly sincerity is to be questioned as to the doing of that duty sincerely. This still flows from our text; the Pharisee greatly used this: for higher and more flaunting language can hardly be found than in the Pharisee's mouth; nor will ascribing to God by the same mouth laud and praise help the business at all: for to be sure, where the effect is base and rotten, the cause cannot be good.

The Pharisee would hold himself that he was not as other men, and then gives thanks to God for this: but the conclusion was most vilely false, and therefore the praise for it could not but be foolish, vain, and frivolous. Whence I infer, that if to use such language in prayer is dangerous, then to affect the use thereof is yet more dangerous. Prayer must be made with humble hearts and sensible words, and of that we have treated before; wherefore high, flaunting, swelling words of vanity, become not a sinner's mouth; no, not at any time; much less when he comes to, and presents himself before God in that solemn duty of prayer. But, I say, there are some that so affect the Pharisee's mode, that they cannot be well if in some sort or other they be not in the practice of it, not knowing what they say, nor whereof they affirm; but these are greatly addicted to hypocrisy and desire of vain-glory, especially if the sound of their words be within the reach of other men's ears.

4. A fourth conclusion is, That reformation and amendment, though good, and before men, are nothing as to justification with God. This is manifest by the condition of our Pharisee: he was a reformed man, a man beyond others for personal righteousness, yet he went out of the temple

from God unjustified ; his works came to nothing with God. Hence I infer, that the man that hath nothing to commend him to God of his own, yet stands as fair before God for justification, and so acceptance, as any other man in the world.

5. A fifth conclusion is, It is the sensible sinner, the self-bemoaning sinner, the self-judging sinner, the self-abhorring sinner, and the self-condemning sinner, whose prayers prevail with God for mercy. Hence I infer, that one reason why men make so many prayers, and prevail no more with God is, because their prayers are rather the floatings of Pharisaical fancies than the fruits of sound sense of sin, and sincere desires of enjoying God in mercy, and in the fruits of the Holy Ghost.



OF THE
TRINITY AND A CHRISTIAN.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

OF THE

TRINITY AND A CHRISTIAN:

How a young or shaken Christian should demean himself under the weighty thoughts of the Doctrine of the Trinity, or Plurality of Persons in the eternal Godhead.

~~~~~

THE reason why I say a *young* or *shaken* Christian, is, because some that are not young, but of an ancient standing, may not only be assaulted with violent temptations concerning gospel-principles, but a second time may become a child, a babe, a shallow man, in the things of God : especially, either when by backsliding he hath provoked God to leave him, or when some new, unexpected, and (as to present strength) over weighty objection doth fall upon the spirit, by means of which great shakings of mind do commonly attend such a soul in the most weighty matters of the concerns of faith, of which this is one that I have supposed in the above-mentioned question : Wherefore passing other things, I will come directly to that, and briefly propose some helps to a soul in such a case.

I. The first preparative.

*First,* Then, be sure thou keep close to the Word of God ; for that is the revelation of the mind and will of God, both as to the truth of what is either in himself or ways, and also as to what he requireth and expecteth of thee, either concerning faith in, or obedience to, what he hath so revealed. Now for thy better performing of this, I shall give thee in brief these following directions.

1. Suffer thyself, by the authority of the Word, to be persuaded that the Scripture indeed is the Word of God,

the Scriptures of truth, the words of the Holy One ; and that they therefore must be every one true, pure, and for ever settled in heaven.

2. Conclude therefore from the former doctrine, that that God whose words they are, is able to make a reconciliation and most sweet and harmonious agreement with all the sayings therein, how obscure, cross, dark, and contradictory soever they seem to thee. To understand all mysteries, to have all knowledge, to be able to comprehend with all saints, is a great work ; enough to crush the spirit, and to stretch the strings of the most capacious, widened soul that breatheth on this side glory, be they notwithstanding exceedingly enlarged by revelation. Paul, when he was caught up to heaven, saw that which was unlawful, because impossible, for man to utter. And saith Christ to the reasoning Pharisee, " If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall you believe if I tell you of heavenly things ? " It is great lewdness, and also insufferable arrogancy, to come to the Word of God, as conceiting already that whatever thou readest must either by thee be understood, or of itself fall to the ground as a senseless error. But God is wiser than man, wherefore fear thou him, and tremble at his word, saying still, with godly suspicion of thine own infirmity, What I see not, teach thou me ; and, Thou art God only wise ; but as for me, I am as a beast before thee.

3. Take heed of taking a part of the Word only, lest thou thereby go away with the truth as mangled in pieces. For instance, where thou readest, " The Lord our God is one Lord," there take heed that thou dost not thence conclude, then there are not three persons in the Godhead : or when thou readest of " the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit," then take heed of concluding there must therefore either be three Gods, or else that Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost are not true God, but the Father only. Wherefore to help thee here, observe,

## II. The second preparative.

1. That the Christian religion requireth credit concerning

every doctrine contained in the Word ; credit, I say, according to the true relation of every sentence that the Holy Ghost hath revealed for the asserting, maintaining, or vindicating that same truth.

2. And therefore, hence it is that a Christian is not called a doer, a reasoner, an objector, and perverse disputer, but a believer. Be thou an example to "the believers ;" and, "believers" were "added to the church," &c.

3. Therefore, know again, that the Word, if it saith and expresseth that this or that is so and so, as to the matter in hand, thou art bound and obliged, both by the name, profession, and the truth, unto which thou hast joined thyself, to assent to, confess, and acknowledge the same, even then when thy carnal reason will not stoop thereto. "Righteous art thou, O God," saith Jeremiah, "yet let me plead with thee ; Wherefore do the wicked live ?" Mark, first he acknowledgeth that God's way with the wicked is just and right, even then when yet he could not see the reason of his actings and dispensations towards them. The same reason is good as to our present case : and hence it is that the apostle saith, the spiritual armour of Christians should be much exercised against those high towering and self-exalting imaginations, that within our own bosoms do exalt themselves against the knowledge of God ; that every thought or carnal reasoning may be not only taken, but brought a captive into obedience to Christ ; that is, be made to stoop to the Word of God, and to give way and place to the doctrine therein contained, how cross soever our thoughts and the Word lie to each other. And it is observable that he here saith, they exalt themselves against the knowledge of God ;" which cannot be understood, that our carnal, natural reason doth exalt itself against an eternal deity, simply considered ; for that nature itself doth gather from the very things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead : it must be then that they exalt themselves against that God as thus and thus revealed in the Word, to wit, against the knowledge of one God, consisting of three



persons, Father, Son, and Spirit ; for this is the doctrine of the Scriptures of truth : and therefore it is observable these thoughts must be brought captive, and be made subject in particular to the Lord Jesus Christ, as to the second person in the Godhead : for the Father is ever acknowledged by all that profess the least of religion ; but the Son is that stumbling-stone and rock of offence, against which thousands dash themselves in pieces ; though in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and in him dwells the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

OF THE

LAW AND A CHRISTIAN.



OF THE

LAW AND A CHRISTIAN.

---

THE law was given twice upon Mount Sinai, but the appearance of the Lord, when he gave it the second time, was wonderfully different from that of his, when at the first he delivered it to Israel.

1. When he gave it the first time, he caused his terror and severity to appear before Moses, to the shaking of his soul and the dismaying of Israel ; but when he gave it the second time, he caused all his goodness to pass before Moses, to the comfort of his conscience and the bowing of his heart.

2. When he gave it the first time, it was with thunderings and lightnings, with blackness and darkness, with flame and smoke, and a tearing sound of the trumpet ; but when he gave it the second time, it was with a proclamation of his name to be merciful, gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgressions, and sins.

3. When he gave it the first time, Moses was called to go up to receive it through the fire, which made him exceedingly fear and quake : but when he went to receive it the second time, he was laid in a clift of the rock.

4. From all which I gather, that, though as to the matter of the law, both as to its being given the first time and the second, it binds the unbeliever under the pains of eternal damnation (if he close not with Christ by faith) ; yet as to the manner of its giving at these two times, I think the first doth more principally intend its force as a cove-

nant of works, not at all respecting the Lord Jesus ; but this second time not (at least in the manner of its being given) respecting such a covenant, but rather as a rule or directory to those who already are found in the clift of the rock Christ ; for the saint himself, though he be without law to God, as it is considered the first or old covenant, yet even he is not without law to him as considered under grace ; not without law to God, but under the law to Christ.

5. Though, therefore, it be sad with the unbeliever, because he only and wholly standeth under the law as it is given in fire, in smoke, in blackness, and darkness, and thunder ; all which threaten him with eternal ruin if he fulfil not the utmost tittle thereof ; yet the believer stands to the law under no such consideration, neither is he so at all to hear or regard it, for he is now removed from thence to the blessed mountain of Zion—to grace and forgiveness of sins ; he is now, I say, by faith in the Lord Jesus, shrouded under so perfect and blessed a righteousness, that this thundering law of Mount Sinai cannot find the least fault or diminution therein, but rather approveth and alloweth thereof, either when or wherever it find it. This is called the righteousness of God without the law, and is also said to be witnessed by both the law and the prophets ; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith in Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe ; for there is no difference.

6. Wherefore, whenever thou who believest in Jesus, dost hear the law in its thundering and lightning fits, as if it would burn up heaven and earth, then say thou, I am freed from this law, these thunderings have nothing to do with my soul ; nay, even this law, while it thus thunders and roars, it doth both allow and approve of my righteousness. I know that Hagar would sometimes be domineering and high, even in Sarah's house, and against her ; but this she is not to be suffered to do, nay, though Sarah herself be barren ; wherefore, serve it also as Sarah served her, and expel her out from thy house. My meaning is, when this law with its thundering threatenings doth attempt to



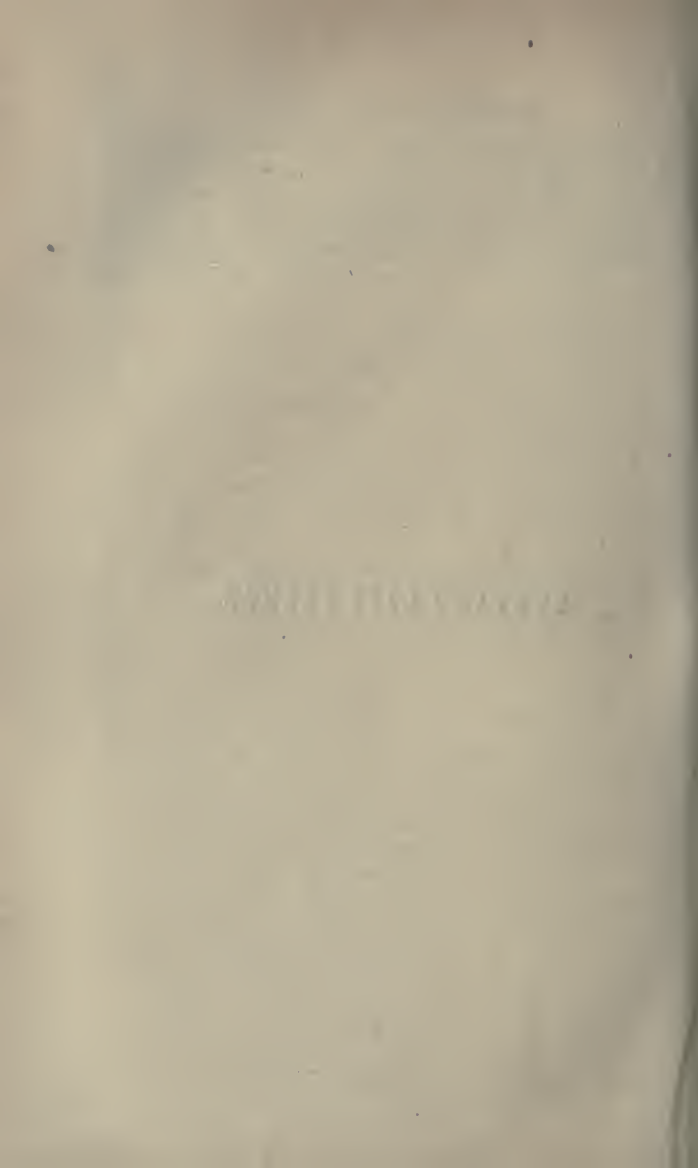
lay hold on thy conscience, shut it out with a promise of grace ; cry, The inn is taken up already ; the Lord Jesus is here entertained, and here is no room for the law. Indeed, if it will be content with being my informer, and so lovingly leave off to judge me, I will be content, it shall be in my sight, I will also delight therein ; but otherwise, I being now made upright without it, and that too with that righteousness which this law speaks well of and approveth, I may not, will not, cannot dare not make it my Saviour and judge, nor suffer it to set up its government in my conscience ; for by so doing, I fall from grace, and Christ Jesus doth profit me nothing.

7. Thus, therefore, the soul that is married to him that is raised up from the dead, both may and ought to deal with this law of God ; yea, it doth greatly dishonour its Lord and refuse its gospel privileges, if it at any time otherwise doth, whatever it seeth or feels. "The law hath power over the wife so long as her husband liveth, but if her husband be dead she is freed from that law ; so that she is no adulteress though she be married to another man." Indeed, so long as thou art alive to sin, and to thy righteousness which is of the law, so long thou hast them for thy husband, and they must reign over thee ; but when once they are become dead unto thee—as they then most certainly will when thou closest with the Lord Jesus Christ—then, I say, thy former husbands have no more to meddle with thee ; thou art freed from their law. Set the case : A woman be cast into prison for a debt of hundreds of pounds ; if after this she marry, yea, though while she is in the jailor's hand, in the same day that she is joined to her husband, her debt is all become his ; yea, and the law also that arrested and imprisoned this woman, as freely tells her, go : she is freed, saith Paul, from that ; and so saith the law of this land.

The sum, then, of what hath been said is this—The Christian hath now nothing to do with the law, as it thundereth and burneth on Sinai, or as it bindeth the conscience to wrath and the displeasure of God for sin ; for from its

thus appearing, it is freed by faith in Christ. Yet it is to have regard thereto, and is to count it holy, just, and good; which, that it may do, it is always, whenever it seeth or regards it, to remember that he who giveth it to us "is merciful, gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth," &c.

BUNYAN'S LAST SERMON.



## BUNYAN'S LAST SERMON:

PREACHED JULY 1688.

---

*"Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God;" John i. 13.*

THE words have a dependence on what goes before, and therefore I must direct you to them for the right understanding of it. You have it thus,—“He came to his own, but his own received him not; but as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them which believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God.” In the words before, you have two things—

*First*, Some of his own rejecting him when he offered himself to them.

*Secondly*, Others of his own receiving him, and making him welcome. Those that reject him he also passes by; but those that receive him, he gives them power to become the sons of God. Now, lest any one should look upon it as good luck or fortune, says he, “They were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” They that did not receive him, they were only born of flesh and blood; but those that receive him, they have God to their father, they receive the doctrine of Christ with a vehement desire.

*First*, I will shew you what he means by “blood.” They that believe are born to it, as an heir is to an inheritance; they are born of God; not of flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God; not of blood—that is, not by generation; not born to the kingdom of heaven by the flesh; not because I am the son of a godly man or woman. That is meant by blood, Acts xvii. 26, “He has made of one blood all



nations." But when he says here, "not of blood," he rejects all carnal privileges they did boast of. They boasted they were Abraham's seed. No, no, says he, it is not of blood; think not to say you have Abraham to your father, you must be born of God if you go to the kingdom of heaven.

*Secondly*, "Nor of the will of the flesh." What must we understand by that?

It is taken for those vehement inclinations that are in man to all manner of looseness, fulfilling the desires of the flesh. That must not be understood here; men are not made the children of God by fulfilling their lustful desires; it must be understood here in the best sense. There is not only in carnal men a will to be vile, but there is in them a will to be saved also—a will to go to heaven also. But this it will not do, it will not privilege a man in the things of the kingdom of God. Natural desires after the things of another world, they are not an argument to prove a man shall go to heaven whenever he dies. I am not a free-willer, I do abhor it; yet there is not the wickedest man but he desires some time or other to be saved. He will read some time or other, or, it may be, pray; but this will not do—"It is not in him that wills, nor in him that runs, but in God that shews mercy;" there is willing and running, and yet to no purpose; Rom. ix. 16, "Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, have not obtained it." Here I do not understand as if the apostle had denied a virtuous course of life to be the way to heaven, but that a man without grace, though he have natural gifts, yet he shall not obtain privilege to go to heaven, and be the son of God. Though a man without grace may have a will to be saved, yet he cannot have that will God's way. Nature, it cannot know anything but the things of nature; the things of God knows no man but by the Spirit of God; unless the Spirit of God be in you, it will leave you on this side the gates of heaven—"Not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." It may be some may have a will, a desire that Ishmael may be saved;

know this, it will not save thy child. If it were our will, I would have you all go to heaven. How many are there in the world that pray for their children, and cry for them, and ready to die ; and this will not do ? God's will is the rule of all ; it is only through Jesus Christ, " which were born, not of flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Now I come to the doctrine.

Men that believe in Jesus Christ to the effectual receiving of Jesus Christ, they are born to it. He does not say they *shall* be born to it, but they *are* born to it ; born of God, unto God, and the things of God, before they receive God to eternal salvation. " Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Now unless he be born of God, he cannot see it. Suppose the kingdom of God be what it will, he cannot see it before he be begotten of God ; suppose it be the Gospel, he cannot see it before he be brought into a state of regeneration ; believing is the consequence of the new birth, " not of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God."

*First*, I will give you a clear description of it under one similitude or two. A child, before it be born into the world, is in the dark dungeon of its mother's womb ; so a child of God, before he be born again, is in the dark dungeon of sin, sees nothing of the kingdom of God, therefore it is called a new birth ; the same soul has love one way in its carnal condition, another way when it is born again.

*Secondly*, As it is compared to a birth, resembling a child in his mother's womb, so it is compared to a man being raised out of the grave ; and to be born again is to be raised out of the grave of sin—" Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee life." To be raised from the grave of sin is to be begotten and born ; Rev. i. 5. There is a famous instance of Christ—" He is the first-begotten from the dead, he is the first-born from the dead ;" unto which our regeneration alludeth,—that is, if you be born again by seeking those things that are above, then there is a similitude betwixt Christ's resurrection and the new birth ; which were born, which were

restored out of this dark world, and translated out of the kingdom of this dark world into the kingdom of his dear Son, and made us live a new life ; this is to be born again ; and he that is delivered from the mother's womb, it is the help of the mother ; so he that is born of God, it is by the Spirit of God. I must give you a few consequences of a new birth.

First of all, a child, you know, is incident to cry as soon as it comes into the world ; for if there be no noise, they say it is dead. You that are born of God, and Christians, if you be not criers, there is no spiritual life in you ; if you be born of God, you are crying ones ; as soon as he has raised you out of the dark dungeon of sin, you cannot but cry to God, What must I do to be saved ? As soon as ever God had touched the jailor, he cries out, " Men and brethren, what must I do to be saved ? " Oh ! how many prayerless professors are there in London that never pray ? Coffee-houses will not let you pray, trades will not let you pray, looking-glasses will not let you pray ; but if you were born of God, you would.

*Secondly*, It is not only natural for a child to cry, but it must crave the breast, it cannot live without the breast ; therefore Peter makes it the true trial of a new-born babe ; the new-born babe desires the sincere milk of the Word, that he may grow thereby. If you be born of God, make it manifest by desiring the breast of God. Do you long for the milk of promises ? A man lives one way when he is in the world, another way when he is brought unto Jesus Christ ; Isa. lxvi., " They shall suck, and be satisfied." If you be born again, there is no satisfaction till you get the milk of God's word into your souls ; Isa. lxvi. 11, " To suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of consolation." O what is a promise to a carnal man ; a whorehouse, it may be, is more sweet to him ; but if you be born again, you cannot live without the milk of God's word. What is a woman's breast to a horse ? But what is it to a child ? There is its comfort night and day, there is its succour night and day. O how loath is he it should be taken from him.

Minding heavenly things, says a carnal man, is but vanity ; but to a child of God, there is his comfort.

*Thirdly*, A child that is newly born, if it have not other comforts to keep it warm than it had in its mother's womb, it dies. It must have something got for its succour ; so Christ had swaddling clothes prepared for him ; so those that are born again, they must have some promise of Christ to keep them alive. Those that are in a carnal state, they warm themselves with other things ; but those that are born again, they cannot live without some promise of Christ to keep them alive, as he did to the poor infant in Ezekiel xvii., " I covered thee with embroidered gold." And when women are with child, what fine things will they prepare for their child ! O but what fine things has Christ prepared to wrap all in that are born again ! O what wrappings of gold has Christ prepared for all that are born again ! Women will dress their children, that every one may see them how fine they are ; so he in Ezekiel xvi. 11—" I decked thee also with ornaments, and I also put bracelets upon thine hands, and a chain on thy neck. And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and ear-rings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head ;" and, says he in the 13th verse, " thou didst prosper to a kingdom." This is to set out nothing in the world but the righteousness of Christ, and the graces of the Spirit, without which a new-born babe cannot live, unless he have the golden righteousness of Christ.

*Fourthly*, A child when it is in its mother's lap, the mother takes great delight to have that which will be for its comfort ; so it is with God's children, they shall be kept on his knee ; Isaiah lxvi. 11, " They shall suck and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolation." Ver. 13, " As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." There is a similitude in these things that nobody knows of but those that are born again.

*Fifthly*, There is usually some similitude betwixt the father and the child ; it may be the child looks like its father ; so those that are born again, they have a new simili-

tude, they have the image of Jesus Christ (Gal. iv.), every one that is born of God has something of the features of heaven upon him. Men love those children that are likest them most usually ; so does God his children ; therefore they are called the children of God. But others do not look like him, therefore they are called Sodomites. Christ describes children of the devil by their features ; the children of the devil, his works they will do ; all works of unrighteousness, they are the devil's works. If you are earthly, you have borne the image of the earthly ; if heavenly, you have borne the image of the heavenly.

*Sixthly*, When a man has a child, he trains him up to his own liking, he learns the custom of his father's house ; so are those that are born of God ; they have learned the custom of the true church of God, there they learn to cry, My Father and my God ; they are brought up in God's house, they learn the method and form of God's house for regulating their lives in this world.

*Seventhly*, Children, it is natural for them to depend upon their father for what they want. If they want a pair of shoes, they go and tell him ; if they want bread, they go and tell him ; so should the children of God do. Do you want spiritual bread ? go tell God of it. Do you want strength of grace ? ask it of God. Do you want strength against Satan's temptations ? go and tell God of it. When the devil tempts you, run home and tell your heavenly Father ; go pour out your complaints to God. This is natural to children ; if any wrong them, they go and tell their father ; so do those that are born of God, when they meet with temptations, go and tell God of them.

The first use is this, to make a strict inquiry whether you be born of God or not. Examine by those things I laid down before of a child of nature and a child of grace. Are you brought out of the dark dungeon of this world into Christ ? Have you learned to cry, My Father ? Jer. iii. 16, " And I said, Thou shalt call me thy Father." All God's children are criers. Can you be quiet without you have a bellyful of the milk of God's word ? Can you be



satisfied without you have peace with God ? Pray you consider it, and be serious with yourselves. If you have not these marks, you will fall short of the kingdom of God, you shall never have an interest there ; there is no intruding. They will say, " Lord, Lord, open to us ; and he will say, I know you not." No child of God, no heavenly inheritance. We sometimes give something to those that are not our children, but not our lands. O do not flatter yourselves with a portion among the sons, unless you live like sons. When we see a king's son play with a beggar, this is unbecoming ; so if you be the king's children, live like the king's children. If you be risen with Christ, set your affections on things above, and not on things below. When you come together, talk of what your Father promised you ; you should all love your Father's will, and be content and pleased with the exercises you meet with in the world. If you are the children of God, live together lovingly. If the world quarrel with you, it is no matter ; but it is sad if you quarrel together. If this be amongst you, it is a sign of ill-breeding, it is not according to rules you have in the Word of God. Dost thou see a soul that has the image of God in him ? Love him, love him ; say, This man and I must go to heaven one day. Serve one another, do good for one another ; and if any wrong you, pray to God to right you, and love the brotherhood.

*Lastly*, If you be the children of God, learn that lesson : " Gird up the loins of your mind as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to your former conversation ; but be ye holy in all manner of conversation." Consider that the holy God is your father, and let this oblige you to live like the children of God, that you may look your Father in the face with comfort another day.



BUNYAN'S DYING SAYINGS.



## BUNYAN'S DYING SAYINGS.

---

### OF SIN.

SIN is the great block and bar to our happiness, the procurer of all miseries to man, both here and hereafter ; take away sin, and nothing can hurt us ; for death temporal, spiritual, and eternal, is the wages of it.

Sin, and man for sin, is the object of the wrath of God. How dreadful therefore must his case be who continues in sin ; for who can bear and grapple with the wrath of God ?

No sin against God can be little, because it is against the great God of heaven and earth ; but if the sinner can find out a *little* God, it may be easy to find out little sins.

Sin turns all God's grace into wantonness : it is the *dare* of his justice ; the *rape* of his mercy ; the *jeer* of his patience ; the *slight* of his power ; and the *contempt* of his love.

Take heed of giving thyself liberty of committing one sin, for that will lead thee to another ; till by an ill custom it become natural.

To begin sin is to lay a foundation for a continuance ; this continuance is the mother of custom, and impudence at last the issue.

The death of Christ giveth us the best discovery of ourselves ; in what condition we were, so that nothing could help us but that ; and the most clear discovery of the dreadful nature of our sins. For if sin be such a dreadful thing as to wring the heart of the Son of God, how shall a poor wretched sinner be able to bear it ?

### OF AFFLICTION.

Nothing can render affliction so heavy as the load of sin ; would you therefore be fitted for afflictions, be sure



to get the burden of your *sins* laid aside, and then what afflictions soever you meet with will be very easy to you.

If thou canst hear and bear the rod of affliction which God shall lay upon thee, remember this lesson, thou art *beaten* that thou mayst be better.

The Lord useth his *flail* of tribulation to separate the chaff from the wheat.

The school of the cross is the school of light ; it discovers the world's vanity, baseness, and wickedness, and lets us see more of God's mind. Out of dark affliction comes a spiritual light.

In times of affliction we commonly meet with the sweetest experiences of the love of God.

Did we heartily renounce the pleasures of this world, we should be very little troubled for our afflictions ; that which renders an afflicted state so insupportable to many, is because they are too much addicted to the pleasures of this life ; and so cannot endure that which makes a separation between them.

#### OF REPENTANCE AND COMING TO CHRIST.

The end of affliction is the discovery of sin ; and of *that* to bring us to the Saviour ; let us therefore, with the prodigal, return unto him, and we shall find ease and rest.

A returning penitent, though formerly bad as the worst of men, may by grace become as good as the best.

To be truly sensible of sin, is to sorrow for *displeasing* of God : to be afflicted, that he is displeased *by us* more than that he is displeased *with us*.

Your intentions to repentance, and the neglect of that soul-saving duty, will rise up in judgment against you.

Repentance carries with it a *divine rhetoric*, and persuades Christ to forgive multitudes of sins committed against him.

Say not to thyself, to-morrow I will repent ; for it is thy duty to do it daily.

The gospel of grace and salvation is above all doctrines

the most dangerous, if it be received in *word* only by graceless men ; if it be not attended with a sensible need of a Saviour, and bring them to him ; for such men only as have the *notion* of it, are of all men most miserable ; for by reason of their knowing more than heathens, this shall only be their final portion, that they shall have greater stripes.

#### OF PRAYER.

Before you enter into prayer, ask thy soul these questions, 1. To what *end*, O my soul ! art thou retired into this place ? Art thou come to converse with the Lord in prayer ? Is he present, will he hear thee ? Is he merciful, will he help thee ? Is thy business slight, is it not concerning the welfare of thy soul ? What words wilt thou use to move him to compassion ?

To make thy preparation complete, consider that thou art but *dust* and *ashes* ; and he the great God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, *that clothes himself with light as with a garment* ; that thou art a vile sinner, and he a holy God ; that thou art but a poor crawling worm, and he the omnipotent Creator.

In all your prayers, forget not to thank the Lord for his mercies.

When thou prayest, rather let thy heart be without *words* than thy words without *heart*.

Prayer will make a man cease from sin, or sin will entice a man to cease from prayer.

The spirit of prayer is more precious than thousands of gold and silver.

Pray often, for prayer is a shield to the soul, a sacrifice to God, and a scourge for Satan.

#### OF THE LORD'S-DAYS, SERMONS, AND WEEK-DAYS.

Have a special care to sanctify the Lord's-day ; for as thou keepest it, so will it be with thee all the week long.

Make the Lord's-day the *market* for thy soul ; let the whole day be spent in prayer, repetitions, or meditations ;

lay aside the affairs of the other parts of the week ; let the sermon thou hast heard be converted into *prayer* : shall God allow thee six days, and wilt thou not afford him one ?

In the church, be careful to serve God ; for thou art in his eyes, and not in man's.

Thou mayst hear sermons often, and do well in practising what thou hearest ; but thou must not expect to be told in a pulpit all that thou oughtest to do, but be studious in reading the Scriptures, and other good books ; what thou hearest may be forgotten, but what thou readest may better be retained.

Forsake not the public worship of God, lest God forsake thee ; not only in public, but in private.

On the week-day, when thou risest in the morning, consider, 1. Thou must die ; 2. Thou mayst die that minute ; 3. What will become of thy soul. Pray often. At night consider, 1. What sins thou hast committed ; 2. How often thou hast prayed ; 3. What hath thy mind been bent upon ; 4. What hath been thy dealing ; 5. What thy conversation ; 6. If thou callest to mind the errors of the day, sleep not without a confession to God, and a hope of pardon. Thus, every morning and evening make up thy account with Almighty God, and thy reckoning will be the less at last.

#### OF THE LOVE OF THE WORLD.

Nothing more hinders a soul from coming to Christ than a vain love of the *world* ; and till a soul is freed from it, it can never have a true love for God.

What are the honours and riches of this world, when compared to the glories of a crown of life ?

Love not the world, for it is a *moth* in a Christian's life.

To despise the world is the way to enjoy heaven ; and blessed are they who delight to converse with God by prayer.

What folly can be greater than to labour for the meat that perisheth, and neglect the food of eternal life ?

God or the world must be neglected at *parting* time, for then is the time of trial.

To seek yourself in this life is to be lost ; and to be humble is to be exalted.

The epicure that delighteth in the dainties of this world, little thinketh that those very creatures will one day witness against him.

#### ON SUFFERING.

It is not every suffering that makes a man a martyr ; but suffering for the Word of God after a right manner ; that is, not only for *righteousness*, but for righteousness' sake ; not only for *truth*, but out of love to truth ; not only for God's Word, but according to it : to wit, in that holy, humble, meek manner, as the Word of God requireth.

It is a rare thing to suffer aright, and to have my spirit in suffering bent against God's enemy, sin. Sin in doctrine, sin in worship, sin in life, and sin in conversation.

Neither the devil, nor men of the world, can kill thy righteousness, or love to it, but by thy own hand ; or separate that and thee asunder, without thy own act. Nor will he that doth indeed suffer for the sake of it, or out of love he bears thereto, be tempted to *exchange* it for the good will of the whole world.

I have often thought that the best of Christians are found in the worst times : and I have thought again, that one reason why we are not better is, because God purges us no more. Noah and Lot, who so *holy* as they in the time of their afflictions ! and yet, who so *idle* as they in the time of their prosperity ?

#### OF DEATH AND JUDGMENT.

As the devil labours by all means to keep out other things that are good, so to keep out of the heart as much as in him lies, the thoughts of passing out of this life into another world ; for he knows if he can but keep them from the serious thoughts of *death*, he shall the more easily keep them in their sins.

Nothing will make us more earnest in working out the work of our salvation than a frequent meditation of mor-

talities; nothing hath a greater influence for the taking off our hearts from vanities, and for the begetting in us desires for holiness.

O! sinner, what a condition wilt thou fall into when thou departest this world; if thou depart unconverted, thou hadst better have been *smothered* the first hour thou wast born; thou hadst better have been plucked one limb from the other; thou hadst better have been made a dog, a toad, a serpent, than to die unconverted; and this thou wilt find true if thou repent not.

A man would be counted a fool to slight a judge before whom he is to have a trial of his whole estate. The trial we are to have before God is of *otherwise* importance; it concerns our eternal happiness or misery, and yet dare we affront him.

The only way for us to escape that terrible judgment is to be often passing a sentence of condemnation upon ourselves here.

When the sound of the trumpet shall be heard, which shall summon the dead to appear before the tribunal of God, the righteous shall hasten out of their graves with joy to meet their Redeemer in the clouds; others shall call to the mountains and hills to fall upon them, to cover them from the sight of their judge; let us, therefore, in time be *posing* ourselves which of the *two* we shall be.

#### OF THE JOYS OF HEAVEN.

There is no good in this life but what is mingled with some evil: honours perplex, riches disquiet, and pleasures ruin health. But in heaven we shall find blessings in their purity, without any ingredient to embitter; with everything to sweeten it.

O! who is able to conceive the inexpressible, inconceivable joys that are there! None but they who have tasted of them. Lord, help us to put such a value upon them here, that in order to prepare ourselves for them, we may be willing to forego the loss of all those deluding pleasures here.



How will the heavens echo for joy, when the bride, the Lamb's wife, shall come to dwell with her husband for ever !

Christ is the desire of nations, the joy of angels, the delight of the Father ; what solace then must the soul be filled with, that hath the possession of him to all eternity !

O ! what acclamations of joy will there be, when all the children of God shall meet together, without fear of being disturbed by the anti-Christian and Cainish brood.

Is there not a time coming when the godly may ask the wicked, what profit they have in their pleasure ? what comfort in their greatness ? and what fruit in all their labour ?

If you would be better satisfied what the beatifical vision means, my request is, that you would live *holily* and go and see.

#### OF THE TORMENTS OF HELL.

Heaven and salvation is not surely *more* promised to the godly, than hell and damnation is threatened to, and shall be executed on, the wicked.

Oh ! who knows the power of God's wrath ? None but damned ones.

Sinners' company are the devil and his angels, tormented in everlasting fire with a curse.

Hell would be a kind of paradise, if it were no worse than the *worst* of this world.

As different as grief is from joy, as torment from rest, as terror from peace ; so different is the state of sinners from that of *saints* in the world to come.



AN EXHORTATION  
TO  
PEACE AND UNITY.

We deem it proper to state, that, though the following Treatise on Christian Union appears in nearly all the collected editions of BUNYAN'S WORKS, yet its genuineness has been called in question by the Rev. Mr Philip in his admirable work, "The Life and Times of Bunyan." Without here entering into this question, we have separately appended it to the works of Bunyan in this volume, and trust that it will not prove unacceptable to our readers, especially considering the efforts that are now being made to promote the living union of all true Christians who hold the one Lord, the one faith, and the one baptism.

# AN EXHORTATION

## TO

### PEACE AND UNITY.

---

*Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.—Ephesians iv. 3.*

BELoved, religion is the great bond of human society ; and it were well if itself were kept within the bond of unity ; and that it may so be, let us, according to the text, use our utmost endeavours “to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

These words contain a counsel and a caution : the counsel is, That we endeavour the unity of the Spirit ; the caution is, That we do it in the bond of peace ; as if I should say, I would have you live in unity, but yet I would have you to be careful that you do not purchase unity with the breach of charity.

Let us therefore be cautious that we do not so press after unity in practice and opinion as to break the bond of peace and affection.

In the handling of these words, I shall observe this method.

I. I shall open the sense of the text.

II. I shall shew wherein this unity and peace consist.

III. I shall shew you the fruits and benefits of it, together with nine inconveniences and mischiefs that attend those churches where unity and peace is wanting.

IV. And, lastly, I shall give you twelve directions and motives for the obtaining of it.



I. As touching the sense of the text, when we are counselled to keep the unity of the Spirit, we are not to understand the Spirit of God, as personally so considered; because the Spirit of God, in that sense, is not capable of being divided, and so there would be no need for us to endeavour to keep the unity of it.

By the unity of the spirit then, we are to understand that unity of mind which the Spirit of God calls for, and requires Christians to endeavour after; hence it is that we are exhorted, by one spirit, with one mind, to strive together for the faith of the gospel; Phil. i. 27.

But farther, the apostle in these words alludes to the state and composition of a natural body, and doth thereby inform us, that the mystical body of Christ holds an analogy with the natural body of man: as, 1. In the natural body there must be a spirit to animate it; for the body without the spirit is dead; James ii. 26. So it is in the mystical body of Christ; the apostle no sooner tells of that one body, but he minds us of that one Spirit; Eph. iv. 4.

2. The body hath joints and bands to unite all the parts; so hath the mystical body of Christ; Col. ii. 19. This is that bond of peace mentioned in the text, as also in the 16th verse of the same chapter, where the whole body is said to be fitly joined together, and compacted, by that which every joint supplieth.

3. The natural body receives counsel and nourishment from the head; so doth the mystical body of Christ; he is their counsellor, and him they must hear; he is their head, and him they must hold: hence it is that the apostle complaineth, Col. ii. 19, of some that did not hold the head from which the whole body by joints and bands hath nourishment.

4. The natural body cannot well subsist, if either the spirit be wounded or the joints broken or dislocated; the body cannot bear a wounded or broken spirit—"A broken spirit drieth the bones;" Prov. xvii. 22, and "A wounded spirit who can bear?" Prov. xviii. 14. And, on the other

hand, how often have the disjointing of the body, and the breakings thereof, occasioned the expiration of the spirit? In like manner it fares with the mystical body of Christ; how do divided spirits break the bonds of peace, which are the joints of this body? And how do the breakings of the body and church of Christ wound the spirit of Christians, and oftentimes occasion the spirit and life of Christianity to languish, if not to expire. How needful is it then that we endeavour the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace!

II. I now come to shew you wherein this unity and peace consists; and this I shall demonstrate in five particulars.

1. This unity and peace may consist with the ignorance of many truths, and in the holding of some errors; or else this duty of peace and unity could not be practicable by any on this side perfection: but we must now endeavour the unity of the spirit, till we come to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God; Eph. iv. 13. Because now, as the apostle saith, "We know in part, and we prophesy in part," and "Now we see through a glass darkly;" 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 12. And as this is true in general, so we may find it true if we descend to particular instances. The disciples seem to be ignorant of that great truth which they had often, and in much plainness, been taught by their Master once and again, viz., that his kingdom was not of this world, and that in the world they should suffer and be persecuted; yet in the 1st of the Acts, ver. 6, we read, that they asked of him if he would at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? thereby discovering that Christ's kingdom (as they thought) should consist in his temporal jurisdiction over Israel, which they expected should now commence and take place amongst them. Again, our Lord tells them, that he had many things to say (and these were many important truths) which they could not now bear; John xvi. 12. And that these were important truths, appear by the 10th and 11th verses, where he is discoursing of righteousness and judg-

ment, and then adds, that he had yet many things to say which they could not bear ; and thereupon promises the Comforter to lead them into ALL TRUTH ; which implies, that they were yet ignorant of many truths, and consequently held divers errors ; and yet for all this, he prays for, and presses them to, their great duty of peace and unity ; John xiv. 27 ; xvii. 21. To this may be added that of Heb. v. 11, where the author saith, he had many things to say of the priestly office of Christ, which by reason of their dulness they were not capable to receive ; as also that in the 10th of the Acts, where Peter seems to be ignorant of the truth, viz., that the gospel was to be preached to all nations ; and contrary hereunto, he erred in thinking it unlawful to preach amongst the Gentiles. I shall add two texts more, one in Acts xix., where we read that those disciples which had been discipled and baptized by John were yet ignorant of the Holy Ghost, and knew not (as the text tells us) whether there were any Holy Ghost or no ; though John did teach constantly, that he that should come after him should baptize with the Holy Ghost and fire. From hence we may easily and plainly infer, that Christians may be ignorant of many truths, by reason of weak and dull capacities, and other such like impediments, even while those truths are with much plainness delivered to them. Again, we read, Heb. v. 13, of some that were unskilful in the word of righteousness, who nevertheless are called babes in Christ, and with whom unity and peace is to be inviolably kept and maintained.

2. As this unity and peace may consist with the ignorance of many truths, and with the holding some errors, so it must consist with (and it cannot consist without) the believing and practising those things which are necessary to salvation and church-communion ; and they are, 1st, Believing that Christ the Son of God died for the sins of men. 2d, That whoever believeth ought to be baptized. The third thing essential to this communion, is a holy and a blameless conversation.

(1.) That believing that the Son of God died for the sins of men is necessary to salvation, I prove by these texts, which tell us, that he that doth not believe shall be damned, Mark xvi. 16 ; John iii. 36 ; Rom. x. 9.

That it is also necessary to church-communion appears from Matt. xvi. 16-18. Peter having confessed that Christ was the Son of the living God, Christ thereupon assures Peter, that upon this rock, viz., this profession of faith, or this Christ which Peter had confessed, he would build his church, and the gates of hell should not prevail against it. And, 1 Cor. iii. 11, the apostle having told the Corinthians that they were God's building, presently adds, that they could not be built upon any foundation but upon that which was laid, which was Jesus Christ. All which proves, that Christian society is founded upon the profession of Christ ; and not only scripture, but the laws of right reason, dictate this, that some rules and orders must be observed for the founding all society, which must be consented to by all that will be of it. Hence it comes to pass, that to own Christ as the Lord and head of Christians is essential to the founding of Christian society.

(2.) The Scriptures have declared, that this faith gives the professors of it a right to baptism, as in the case of the eunuch, Acts viii. When he demanded why he might not be baptized, Philip answered, that if he believed with all his heart, he might. The eunuch thereupon confessing Christ, was baptized.

Now, that baptism is essential to church-communion, I prove from 1 Cor. xii., where we shall find the apostle labouring to prevent an evil use that might be made of spiritual gifts, as thereby to be puffed up, and to think that such as wanted them were not of the body, or to be esteemed members : he thereupon resolves, that whoever did confess Christ, and own him for his head, did it by the Spirit, ver. 3, though they might not have such a visible manifestation of it as others had, and therefore they ought to be owned as members, as appears, ver. 23. And not only because they have called him Lord by the Spirit, but be-

cause they have, by the guidance and direction of the same Spirit, been baptized, ver. 13, "For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body," &c. I need not go about to confute that notion that some of late have had of this text, viz., that the baptism here spoken of is the baptism of the Spirit, because you have not owned and declared that notion as your judgment, but on the contrary, all of you that I have ever conversed with, have declared it to be understood of baptism with water, by the direction of the Spirit: If so, then it follows, that men and women are declared members of Christ's body by baptism, and cannot be by scripture reputed and esteemed so without it; which farther appears from Rom. vi. 5, where men by baptism are said to be "planted" into the likeness of his death; and Col. ii. 12, we are said to be "buried with him" by baptism. All which, together with the consent of all Christians (some few in these later times excepted), do prove that baptism is necessary to the initiating persons into the Church of Christ.

(3.) Holiness of life is essential to church-communion, because it seems to be the reason why Christ founded a church in the world, viz., that men might thereby be watched over, and kept from falling; and that if any be overtaken with a fault, he that is spiritual might restore him, that by this means men and women might be preserved without blame to the coming of Christ; and the grace of God teacheth us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly and uprightly in this present evil world; Tit. ii. 11, 12. "And let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity;" 2 Tim. ii. 19. And James tells us (speaking of the Christian religion), that "pure religion, and undefiled before God, is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world;" James i. 27. From all which (together with many more texts that might be produced) it appears, that an unholy and profane life is inconsistent with Christian religion and society; and that holiness is essential to salvation and church-communion. So that



these three things, faith, baptism, and a holy life, as I said before, all churches must agree and unite in, as those things which, when wanting, will destroy their being. And let not any think, that when I say, believing the Son of God died for the sins of men is essential to salvation and church-communion, that I hereby would exclude all other articles of the Christian creed as not necessary; as the belief of the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment, &c., which, for want of time, I omit to speak particularly to, and the rather, because I understand this great article of believing the Son of God died for the sins of men is comprehensive of all others, and is that from whence all other articles may easily be inferred.

And here I would not be mistaken, as though I held there was nothing else for Christians to practise, when I say this is all that is requisite to church-communion; for I very well know, that Christ requires many other things of us, after we are members of his body, which, if we knowingly or maliciously refuse, may be the cause, not only of excommunication, but damnation. But yet these are such things as relate to the well-being and not to the being of churches; as laying on of hands in the primitive times upon believers, by which they did receive the gifts of the Spirit: This, I say, was for the increase and edifying of the body, and not that thereby they might become of the body of Christ, for that they were before. And do not think that I believe laying on of hands was no apostolical institution, because I say men are not thereby made members of Christ's body, or because I say that it is not essential to church-communion. Why should I be thought to be against a fire in the chimney, because I say it must not be in the thatch of the house? Consider, then, how pernicious a thing it is to make every doctrine (though true) the bond of communion; this is that which destroys unity, and by this rule all men must be perfect before they can be in peace: for do we not see daily, that as soon as men come to a clearer understanding of the mind of God (to say the best of what they hold), that presently

all men are excommunicable, if not damnable, that do not agree with them. Do not some believe and see that to be pride and covetousness, which others do not, because (it may be) they have more narrowly and diligently searched into their duty of these things than others have? What then? Must all men that have not so large acquaintance of their duty herein be excommunicated? Indeed it were to be wished that more moderation in apparel and secular concerns were found among churches: but God forbid, that if they should come short herein, that we should say, as one lately said, that he could not communicate with such a people, because they were proud and superfluous in their apparel.

Let me appeal to such, and demand of them, if there was not a time, since they believed and were baptized, wherein they did not believe laying on of hands a duty? and did they not then believe, and do they not still believe, they were members of the body of Christ? And was not there a time when you did not so well understand the nature and extent of pride and covetousness as now you do? And did you not then believe, and do you not still believe, that you were true members of Christ, though less perfect? Why then should you not judge of those that differ from you herein, as you judged of yourselves when you were as they now are? How needful then is it for Christians to distinguish (if ever they would be at peace and unity) between those truths which are essential to church-communion, and those that are not?

3. Unity and peace consists in all as with one shoulder practising and putting in execution the things we do know; Phil. iii. 16. "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, and mind the same thing." How sad is it to see our zeal consume us and our precious time in things doubtful and disputable, while we are not concerned nor affected with the practice of those indisputable things we all agree in! We all know charity to be the great command, and yet how few agree to practise it? We all know they that labour in the word and doctrine are worthy of double honour; and that God

hath ordained, that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel. These duties, however others have cavilled at them, I know you agree in them, and are persuaded of your duty therein : but where is your zeal to practise ? O how well would it be with churches, if they were but half as zealous for the great, and plain, and indisputable things, and the more chargeable and costly things of religion, as they are for things doubtful or less necessary, or for things that are no charge to them, and cost them nothing but the breath of contention, though that may be too great a price for the small things they purchase with it !

But further, Do we not all agree, that men that preach the gospel should do it like workmen that need not be ashamed ? and yet how little is this considered by many preachers, who never consider before they speak of what they say, or whereof they affirm ! How few give themselves to study that they may be approved ! How few meditate and give themselves to these things, that their profiting may appear to all !

For the Lord's sake let us unite to practise those things we know ; and if we would have more talents, let us all agree to improve those we have.

See the spirit that was among the primitive professors, that knowing and believing how much it concerned them in the propagating of Christianity, to shew forth love to one another (that so all might know them to be Christ's disciples), rather than there should be any complainings among them, they sold all they had. O how zealous were these to practise, and as with one shoulder to do that that was upon their hearts for God ! I might further add, how often have we agreed in our judgment ? and hath it not been upon our hearts, that this and the other thing is good to be done, to enlighten the dark world, and to repair the breaches of churches, and to raise up those churches that now lie gasping, and among whom the soul of religion is expiring ? But what do we more than talk of them ? Do not most decline these things, when they either call for their purses or their persons to help in this and such like works as these ? Let

us then, in what we know, unite, that we may put it in practice, remembering, that if we know these things, we shall be happy if we do them.

4. This unity and peace consists in our joining and agreeing to pray for, and to press after, those truths we do not know. The disciples in the primitive times were conscious of their imperfections, and therefore they with one accord continued in prayer and supplications. If we were more in the sense of our ignorance and imperfections, we should carry it better towards those that differ from us: then we should abound more in the spirit of meekness and forbearance, that thereby we might bring others (or be brought by others) to the knowledge of the truth: this would make us go to God, and say with Elihu, Job xxxiv. 32, "That which we know not, teach thou us." Brethren, did we but all agree that we were erring in many things, we should soon agree to go to God, and pray for more wisdom and revelation of his mind and will concerning us.

But here is our misery, that we no sooner receive any thing for truth, but we presently ascend the chair of infallibility with it, as though in this we could not err: hence it is we are impatient of contradiction, and become uncharitable to those that are not of the same mind; but now a consciousness that we may mistake, or that if my brother err in one thing, I may err in another; this will unite us in affection, and engage us to press after perfection, according to that of the apostle; Phil. iii. 13-15, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: But this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. And if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you." O then that we could but unite and agree to go to God for one another, in confidence that he will teach us; and that if any one of us want wisdom (as who of us does not), we might agree to ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth no man! Let us, like those people

spoken of in the 2d of Isaiah, say to one another, "Come, let us go to the Lord, for he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths."

5. This unity and peace mainly consists in unity of love and affection : this is the great and indispensable duty of all Christians ; by this they are declared Christ's disciples : And hence it is that love is called "the great commandment," "the old commandment," and "the new commandment ;" that which was commanded in the beginning, and will remain to the end, yea, and after the end. 1 Cor. xiii. 8, "Charity never faileth ; but whether there be tongues, they shall cease ; or whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away." And ver. 13, "And now abideth faith, hope, charity ; but the greatest of these is charity." And Col. iii. 14, "Above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness ;" because charity is the end of the commandment, 1 Tim. i. 5. Charity is therefore called "the royal law ;" as though it had a superintendency over other laws, and doubtless is a law to which other laws must give place, when they come in competition with it ; "above all things, therefore, have fervent charity among yourselves ; for charity shall cover the multitude of sins ;" 1 Pet. iv. 8. Let us therefore live in unity and peace, and the God of love and peace will be with us.

That you may so do, let me remind you (in the words of a learned man), that the unity of the church is a unity of love and affection, and not a bare uniformity of practice and opinion.

III. Having shewn you wherein this unity consists, I now come to the third general thing propounded : and that is, to shew you the fruits and benefits of unity and peace, together with the mischiefs and inconveniences that attend those churches where unity and peace are wanting.

1. Unity and peace is a duty well-pleasing to God, who is styled the author of peace and not of confusion. In all the churches God's Spirit rejoiceth in the unity of our spirits ; but on the other hand, where strife and divisions are, there the Spirit of God is grieved. Hence it is that the



apostle no sooner calls upon the Ephesians not to grieve the Spirit of God, but he presently subjoins us a remedy against that evil, that they put away bitterness and evil-speaking, and be kind one to another, and tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven them ; Eph. iv. 30, 32.

2. As unity and peace is pleasing to God, and rejoiceth his Spirit, so it rejoiceth the hearts and spirits of God's people. Unity and peace brings heaven down upon earth among us : hence it is that the apostle tells us, Rom. iv. 17, that "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." Where unity and peace is, there is heaven upon earth ; by this we taste the first fruits of that blessed estate we shall one day live in the fruition of ; when we shall come "to the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect ;" Heb. xii. 23.

This outward peace of the church (as a learned man observes) distils into peace of conscience, and turns writings and readings of controversy into treatises of mortification and devotion.

And the Psalmist tells us, that it is not only good, but pleasant for brethren to dwell together in unity, Psalm cxxxiii. But where unity and peace is wanting, there are storms and troubles ; "where envy and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work ;" James iii. 16. It is the outward peace of the church that increaseth our inward joy ; and the peace of God's house gives us occasion to eat our meat with gladness in our own houses, Acts ii. 46.

3. The unity and peace of the church makes communion of saints desirable. What is it that embitters church-communion, and makes it burdensome, but divisions ? Have you not heard many complain, that they are weary of church-communion, because of church-contention ? but now where unity and peace is, there Christians long for communion.

David saith, that he was glad when they said unto him,

"Let us go to the house of God;" Psalm cxxii. 1. Why was this, but because (as the third verse tells us) Jerusalem was a city compact together, where the tribes went up, the tribes of the Lord, to give thanks to his name? And David, speaking of the man that was once his friend, doth thereby let us know the benefit of peace and unity; Psalm lv. 14. "We," saith he, "took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in company." Where unity is strongest, communion is sweetest and most desirable. You see then that peace and union fills the people of God with desires after communion: but, on the other hand, hear how David complains, Psalm cxx., "Wo is me, that I sojourn in Me-sech, and that I dwell in the tents of Kedar." The Psalmist here is thought to allude to a sort of men that dwelt in the deserts of Arabia, that got their livings by contention; and therefore he adds, ver. 6, that his soul had long dwelt with them that hated peace. This was that which made him long for the courts of God, and esteem one day in his house better than a thousand. This made his soul even faint for the house of God, because of the peace of it; "Blessed are they," saith he, "that dwell in thy house, they will be still praising thee." There is a certain note of concord, as appears, Acts ii., where we read of primitive Christians, meeting with one accord, praising God.

4. Where unity and peace is, there many mischiefs and inconveniences are prevented, which attend those people where peace and unity are wanting: and of those many that might be mentioned, I shall briefly insist upon these nine.

1. Where unity and peace is wanting, there is much precious time spent to no purpose. How many days are spent, and how many fruitless journeys made to no profit, where the people are not in peace? How often have many redeemed time (even in seed-time and harvest) when they could scarce afford it, to go to church, and, by reason of their divisions, come home worse than they went, repenting they have spent so much precious time to so little benefit? How sad is it to see men spend their precious time, in which

they should work out their salvation, in labouring, as in the fire, to prove an uncertain and doubtful proposition, and to trifle away their time, in which they should make their calling and election sure, to make sure of an opinion, which, when they have done all, they are not infallibly sure whether it be true or no, because all things necessary to salvation and church-communion are plainly laid down in scripture, in which we may be infallibly sure of the truth of them ; but for other things that we have no plain texts for, but the truth of them depends upon our interpretations, here we must be cautioned, that we do not spend much time in imposing those upon others, or venting those among others, unless we can assume infallibility, otherwise we spend time upon uncertainty. And whoever casts their eyes abroad, and do open their ears to intelligence, shall both see, and to their sorrow hear, that many churches spend most of their time in jangling and contending about those things which are neither essential to salvation nor church-communion ; and that which is worse, about such doubtful questions which they are never able to give an infallible solution of. But now where unity and peace is, there our time is spent in praising God ; and in those great questions, What we should do to be saved ? and, How we may be more holy and more humble towards God, and more charitable and more serviceable to one another ?

2. Where unity and peace is wanting, there is evil surmising and evil speaking, to the damage and disgrace, if not to the ruining, of one another ; Gal. v. 14, 15. The whole law is fulfilled in one word, " Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if you bite and devour one another, take heed you be not consumed one of another." No sooner the bond of charity is broken, which is as a wall about Christians, but soon they begin to make havock and spoil of one another ; then there is raising evil reports, and taking up evil reports, against each other. Hence it is that whispering and backbiting proceeds, and going from house to house to blazon the faults and infirmities of others : hence it is that we watch for the haltings of one another, and

do inwardly rejoice at the miscarriages of others, saying in our hearts, "Ha! ha! so we would have it:" but now where unity and peace is, there is charity; and where charity is, there we are willing to hide the faults, and cover the nakedness, of our brethren. "Charity thinketh no evil;" 1 Cor. xiii. 5; and therefore it cannot surmise, neither will it speak evil.

3. Where unity and peace is wanting, there can be no great matters enterprised—we cannot do much for God, nor much for one another; when the devil would hinder the bringing to pass of good in nations and churches, he divides their counsels (and as one well observes), he divides their heads, that he may divide their hands; when Jacob had prophesied of the cruelty of Simon and Levi, who were brethren, he threatens them with the consequent of it; Gen. xlix. 7, "I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel." The devil is not to learn that maxim he hath taught the Machiavellians of the world, *Divide et impera*; divide and rule. It is an united force that is formidable. Hence the spouse in the Canticles is said to be but one, and the only one of her mother; Cant. vi. 9. Hereupon it is said of her, ver. 10, "That she is terrible as an army with banners." What can a divided army do, or a disordered army that have lost their banners, or for fear or shame thrown them away? In like manner, what can Christians do for Christ, and the enlarging of his dominions in the world, in bringing men from darkness to light, while themselves are divided and disordered? Peace is to Christians as great rivers are to some cities, which (besides other benefits and commodities) are natural fortifications by reason whereof those places are made impregnable; but when, by the subtilty of an adversary or the folly of the citizens, these waters come to be divided into little petty rivulets, how soon are they assailed and taken? Thus it fares with churches, when once the devil or their own folly divides them, they will be so far from resisting of him, that they will be soon subjected by him.

Peace is to churches as walls to a city; nay, unity hath

defended cities that had no walls. It was once demanded of Agesilaus, why Lacedemon had no walls ; he answers (pointing back to the city), That the concord of the citizens was the strength of the city. In like manner, Christians are strong when united ; then they are more capable to resist temptation, and to succour such as are tempted. When unity and peace is among the churches, then are they like a walled town ; and when peace is the church's walls, salvation will be her bulwarks.

Plutarch tells us of one Silurus that had eighty sons, whom he calls to him as he lay upon his death-bed, and gave them a sheaf of arrows, thereby to signify, that if they lived in unity, they might do much, but if they divided, they would come to nothing. If Christians were all of one piece, if they were all but one lump, or but one sheaf or bundle, how great are the things they might do for Christ and his people in the world, whereas otherwise they can do little but dishonour him, and offend his !

It is reported of the leviathan, that his strength is in his scales ; Job xli. 15-17, " His scales are his pride, shut up together as with a close seal ; one is so near to another, that no air can come between them : they are joined together, they stick together, they cannot be sundered." If the church of God were united like the scales of the leviathan, it would not be every brain-sick notion, nor angry speculation, that would cause its separation.

Solomon saith, " Two are better than one," because, if one fall, the other may raise him ; then surely twenty are better than two, and an hundred are better than twenty, for the same reason ; because they are more capable to help one another. If ever Christians would do any thing to raise up the fallen tabernacles of Jacob, and to strengthen the weak, and comfort the feeble, and to fetch back those that have gone astray, it must be by unity.

We read of the men of Babel, Gen xi. 6, " The Lord said, Behold, the people are one, &c., and now nothing will be restrained from them that they have imagined to do."

We learn by reason, what great things may be done in



worldly achievements where unity is ; and shall not reason (assisted with the motives of religion) teach us, that unity among Christians may enable them to enterprise greater things for Christ ? Would not this make Satan fall from heaven like lightning ? For as unity built literal Babel, it is unity that must pull down mystical Babel. And, on the other hand, where divisions are, there is confusion ; by this means a Babel hath been built in every age. It hath been observed by a learned man—and I wish I could not say truly observed—that there is most of Babel and confusion among those that cry out most against it.

Would we have a hand to destroy Babylon ? let us have a heart to unite one among another.

Our English histories tell us, that after Austin the monk had been some time in England, he heard of some of the remains of the British Christians, which he convened to a place which Cambden in his *Britannia* calls “Austin’s Oak.” Here they met to consult about matters of religion ; but such was their division, by reason of Austin’s imposing spirit, that our stories tell us that synod was only famous for this, that they only met and did nothing. This is the mischief of divisions—they hinder the doing of much good ; and if Christians that are divided be ever famous for any thing, it will be, that they have often met together, and talked of this and the other thing, but they did nothing.

4. Where unity and peace is wanting, there the weak are wounded, and the wicked are hardened. Unity may well be compared to precious oil. Psalm cxxxiii. 2. It is the nature of oil to heal that which is wounded, and to soften that which is hard. Those men that have hardened themselves against God and his people, when they shall behold unity and peace among them, will say, God is in them indeed : and on the other hand, are they not ready to say, when they see you divided, That the devil is in you that you cannot agree !

5. Divisions and want of peace keep those out of the church that would come in ; and cause many to go out that are in.

“ The divisions of Christians (as a learned man observes) are a scandal to the Jews, an opprobrium to the Gentiles, and an inlet to atheism and infidelity :” insomuch that our controversies about religion (especially as they have been of late managed) have made religion itself become a controversy. O then, how good and pleasant a thing is it for brethren to dwell together in unity ! The peace and unity that was among the primitive Christians drew others to them. What hinders the conversion of the Jews, but the divisions of Christians ? Must I be a Christian ? says the Jew. What Christian must I be ? what sect must I be of ? The Jews (as one observes), glossing upon that text in Isa. xi. 6, where it is prophesied, That the lion and the lamb shall lie down together, and that there shall be none left to hurt nor destroy in all God’s holy mountain : they interpreting these sayings to signify the concord and peace that shall be among the people that shall own the Messiah, do from hence conclude, that the Messiah is not yet come, because of the contentions and divisions that are among those that profess him. And the apostle saith, 1 Cor. xiv. 23, that if an unbeliever should see their disorders, he would say they were mad ; but where unity and peace is, there the churches are multiplied. We read, Acts ix., that when the churches had rest, they multiplied ; and Acts ii. 46, 47, when the church was serving God with one accord, “ the Lord added to them daily such as should be saved.”

It is unity brings men into the church, and divisions keep them out. It is reported of an Indian, passing by the house of a Christian, and hearing them contending, being desired to turn in, he refused, saying, “ Habamach dwells there,” meaning that the devil dwelt there : but where unity and peace is, there God is ; and he that dwells in love, dwells in God. The apostle tells the Corinthians, that if they walked orderly, even the unbelievers would hereby be enforced to come and worship, and say, God was in them indeed. And we read, Zech. viii. 23, of a time when ten men shall take hold of a Jew, and say, “ We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.”

And hence it is that Christ prays, John xvii. 21, that his disciples might be one, as the Father and he were one, that the world might believe the Father sent him : as if he should say, you may preach me as long as you will, and to little purpose, if you are not at peace and unity among yourselves. Such was the unity of Christians in former days, that the intelligent heathen would say of them, that though they had many bodies, yet they had but one soul. And we read the same of them, Acts iv. 32, that "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul."

And as the learned Stillingfleet observes in his *Irenicum* : "The unity and peace that was then among Christians made religion amiable in the judgment of impartial heathens : Christians were then known by the benignity and sweetness of their dispositions, by the candour and ingenuity of their spirits, by their mutual love, forbearance, and condescension to one another. But either this is not the practice of Christianity (viz., a duty that Christians are now bound to observe), or else it is not calculated for our meridian, where the spirits of men are of too high an elevation for it ; for if pride and uncharitableness, if divisions and strifes, if wrath and envy, if animosities and contentions, were but the marks of true Christians, Diogenes need never light his lamp at noon to find out such among us ; but if a spirit of meekness, gentleness, and condescension, if a stooping to the weaknesses and infirmities of one another, if pursuit after peace, when it flies from us, be the indispensable duties, and characteristic notes of Christians, it may possibly prove a difficult inquest to find out such among the crowds of those that shelter themselves under that glorious name."

It is the unity and peace of churches that brings others to them, and makes Christianity amiable. What is prophesied of the church of the Jews may in this case be applied to the Gentile church, Isa. lxvi. 12, that when once God extends peace to her like a river, the Gentiles shall come in like a flowing stream ; then (and not till then) the glory of the Lord shall arise upon his churches, and his

glory shall be seen among them ; then shall their hearts fear and be enlarged, because the abundance of the nations shall be converted to them.

6. As want of unity and peace keeps those out of the church that would come in, so it hinders the growth of those that are in. Jars and divisions, wranglings and prejudices, eat out the growth, if not the life of religion. These are those waters of Marah, that embitter our spirits, and quench the Spirit of God. Unity and peace is said to be like the dew of Hermon, and as a dew that descended upon Sion, where the Lord commanded his blessing ; Psalm cxxxiii. 3.

Divisions run religion into briars and thorns, contentions and parties. Divisions are to churches like wars in countries : where wars are, the ground lieth waste and untilled, none takes care of it. It is love that edifieth, but division pulleth down. Divisions are as the north-east wind to the fruits, which causeth them to dwindle away to nothing ; but when the storms are over, every thing begins to grow. When men are divided, they seldom speak the truth in love ; and then no marvel they grow not up to him in all things, who is the head.

It is a sad presage of an approaching famine (as one well observes), not of bread nor water, but of hearing the word of God, when the thin ears of corn devour the plump full ones ; when the lean kine devour the fat ones ; when our controversies about doubtful things, and things of less moment, eat up our zeal for the more indisputable and practical things in religion : which may give us cause to fear, that this will be the character by which our age will be known to posterity—that it was the age that talked of religion most, and loved it least.

Look upon those churches where peace is, and there you shall find prosperity. When the churches had rest, they were not only multiplied, but, walking in the fear of the Lord and the comforts of the Holy Ghost, they were edified ; it is when the whole body is knit together, as with joints and bands, that they increase with the increase of God.

We are at a stand sometimes, why there is so little growth among churches, why men have been so long in learning, and are yet so far from attaining the knowledge of the truth ; some have given one reason, and some another ; some say pride is the cause, and others say covetousness is the cause. I wish I could say these were no causes ; but I observe, that when God entered his controversy with his people of old, he mainly insisted upon some one sin, as idolatry, and shedding innocent blood, &c., as comprehensive of the rest ; not but that they were guilty of other sins, but those that were the most capital are particularly insisted on : in like manner, whoever would but take a review of churches that live in contentions and divisions, may easily find that breach of unity and charity is their capital sin, and the occasion of all other sins. No marvel then, that the Scripture saith, the whole law is fulfilled in love : and if so, then where love is wanting, it needs must follow the whole law is broken. It is where love grows cold that sin abounds ; and therefore the want of unity and peace is the cause of that leanness and barrenness that is among us ; it is true in spirituals as well as temporals, that peace brings plenty.

7. Where unity and peace is wanting, our prayers are hindered ; the promise is, that what we shall agree to ask shall be given us of our heavenly Father : no marvel we pray and pray, and yet are not answered ; it is because we are not agreed what to have.

It is reported that the people in Lacedemonia, coming to make supplication to their idol god, some of them asked for rain, and others of them asked for fair weather : the oracle returns them this answer, That they should go first and agree among themselves. Would a heathen god refuse to answer such prayers in which the supplicants were not agreed, and shall we think the true God will answer them ?

We see then that divisions hinder our prayers, and lay a prohibition on our sacrifice : " If thou bring thy gift to the altar," saith Christ, " and there remember that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave thy gift, and go, and



first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer it." So that want of unity and charity hinders even our particular prayers and devotions.

This hindered the prayers and fastings of the people of old from finding acceptance; Isa. lviii. 3. The people ask the reason wherefore they fasted, and God did not see nor take notice of them. He gives this reason, Because they fasted for strife and debate, and hid their face from their own flesh. Again, Isa. lix., the Lord saith, his hand was not shortened, that he could not save; nor his ear heavy, that he could not hear: but their sins had separated between their God and them. And among those many sins they stood chargeable with, this was none of the least, viz., that the way of peace they had not known. You see where peace was wanting, prayers were hindered, both under the Old and New Testaments.

The sacrifice of the people, in the 65th of Isaiah, that said, "Stand by thyself, I am holier than thou," was a smoke in the nostrils of the Lord. On the other hand, we read how acceptable those prayers were that were made with one accord, Acts iv. 24, compared with verse 31. They prayed with one accord, and they were all of one heart, and of one soul: And see the benefit of it, "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and spoke the word with all boldness;" which was the very thing they prayed for, as appears verse 29. And the apostle exhorts the husband to dwell with his wife, that their prayers might not be hindered; 1 Pet. iii. 7. We see then want of unity and peace, either in families or churches, is a hinderance of prayers.

8. It is a dishonour and disparagement to Christ that his family should be divided. When an army falls into mutiny and division, it reflects disparagement on him that hath the conduct of it. In like manner, the divisions of families are a dishonour to the heads, and those that govern them. And if so, then how greatly do we dishonour our Lord and governor, who gave his body to be broken to keep his church from breaking, who prayed for their peace and unity, and left peace at his departing from them for a

legacy, even a peace which the world could not bestow upon them.

9. Where there is peace and unity, there is a sympathy with each other ; that which is the want of one will be the want of all. "Who is afflicted," saith the apostle, "and I burn not?" We should then "remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them ; and them which suffer adversity, as being ourselves also of the body ;" Heb. xiii.

3. But where the body is broken, or men are not reckoned or esteemed of the body, no marvel we are so little affected with such as are afflicted. Where divisions are, that which is the joy of the one is the grief of another ; but where unity and peace and charity abound, there we shall find Christians in mourning with them that mourn, and rejoicing with them that rejoice ; then they will not envy the prosperity of others, nor secretly rejoice at the miseries or miscarriages of any.

IV. Last of all, I now come to give you twelve directions and motives for the obtaining peace and unity.

1. If ever we would live in peace and unity, we must pray for it. We are required to seek peace : of whom then can we seek it with expectation to find it, but of him who is a God of peace, and hath promised to bless his people with peace ? It is God that hath promised to give his people one heart, and one way ; yet for all these things he will be sought unto : O then let us seek peace, and pray for peace, because God shall prosper them that love it.

The peace of churches is that which the apostle prays for in all his epistles ; in which his desire is, that grace and peace may be multiplied and increased among them.

2. They that would endeavour the peace of the churches, must be careful who they commit the care and oversight of the churches to ; as (1.)—Over and besides those qualifications that should be in all Christians, they that rule the church of God should be men of counsel and understanding. Where there is an ignorant ministry, there is commonly an ignorant people, according as it was of old—Like priest like people.

How sad is it to see the church of God committed to the care of such that pretend to be teachers of others, that understand not what they say, or whereof they affirm. No marvel the peace of churches is broken, when their watchmen want skill to preserve their unity, which of all other things is as the church's walls ; when they are divided, no wonder they crumble to atoms, if there is no skilful physician to heal them. It is sad when there is no balm in Gilead, and when there is no physician there. Hence it is, that the wounds of churches become incurable, like the wounds of God's people of old, either not healed at all, or else slightly healed, and to no purpose. May it not be said of many churches at this day, as God said of the church of Israel, That he sought for a man among them that should stand in the gap, and make up the breach ; but he found none ?

Remember what was said of old, Mal. ii. 7, The priest's lips preserve knowledge : and the people should seek the law at his mouth. But when this is wanting, the people will be stumbling, and departing from God and one another ; therefore God complains, Hos. iv. 6, That his people were destroyed for want of knowledge ; that is, for want of knowing guides ; for if the light that is in them that teach be darkness, how great is that darkness ! and if the blind lead the blind, no marvel both fall into the ditch.

How many are there that take upon them to teach others, that had need be taught in the beginning of religion ; that instead of multiplying knowledge, multiply words without knowledge ; and instead of making known God's counsel, darken counsel by words without knowledge ? The apostle speaks of some that did more than darken counsel ; for they wrested the counsel of God ; 2 Pet. iii. 16. In Paul's epistles, saith he, "are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, to their own destruction." Some things in the Scriptures are hard to be known, and they are made harder by such unlearned teachers as utter their own notions by words without knowledge.

None are more bold and adventurous to take upon

them to expound the dark mysteries and sayings of the prophets and Revelations, and the 9th of the Romans. which I believe contains some of those many things which, in Paul's epistles, Peter saith, were "hard to be understood;" I say none are more forward to dig in these mines than those that can hardly give a sound reason for the first principles of religion; and such as are ignorant of many more weighty things that are easily to be seen in the face and superficies of the Scripture; nothing will serve these but swimming in the deeps, when they have not yet learned to wade through the shallows of the Scriptures: like the Gnosticks of old, who thought they knew all things, though they knew nothing as they ought to know. And as those Gnosticks did of old, so do such teachers of late break the unity and peace of churches.

How needful then is it, that if we desire the peace of churches, that we choose out men of knowledge, who may be able to keep them from being shattered and scattered with every wind of doctrine: and who may be able to convince and stop the mouths of gainsayers.

(2.) You must not only choose men of counsel, but if you would design the unity and peace of the churches, you must choose men of courage to govern them; for as there must be wisdom to bear with some, so there must be courage to correct others: as some must be instructed meekly, so others must be rebuked sharply, that they may be sound in the faith; there must be wisdom to rebuke some with long-suffering, and there must be courage to suppress and stop the mouths of others. The apostle tells Titus of some whose mouths must be stopped, or else they would subvert whole houses, Titus i. 11. Where this courage hath been wanting, not only whole houses, but whole churches have been subverted. And Paul tells the Galatians, that when he saw some endeavour to bring the churches into bondage, that he did not give place to them, no not for an hour, &c., Gal. ii. 5. If this course had been taken by the rulers of churches, their peace had not been so often invaded by unruly and vain talkers.

3. In choosing men to rule (if you would endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit, and the bond of peace thereby), be careful you choose men of peaceable dispositions. That which hath much annoyed the peace of churches hath been the froward and perverse spirits of the rulers thereof. Solomon therefore adviseth, That with a furious man we should not go, lest we learn his ways, and get a snare to our souls, Prov. xxii. 24, 25, and with the froward we learn frowardness. How do some men's words eat like a canker ; who instead of lifting up their voices like a trumpet to sound a parley for peace, have rather sounded an alarm to war and contention. If ever we would live in peace, let us reverence the feet of them that bring the glad tidings of it.

O how have some men made it their business to preach contentions, and upon their entertainment of every novel opinion to preach separation ! How hath God's word been stretched and torn to furnish these men with arguments to tear churches ! Have not our ears heard those texts that say, " Come out from among them, and be separate," &c., and " Withdraw from every brother that walks disorderly ?" I say, have we not heard these texts that were written to prevent disorder brought to countenance the greatest disorder that ever was in the church of God, even schism and division ? whereas one of these exhortations was written to the church of Corinth, to separate themselves from the idol's temple, and the idol's table, in which many of them lived in the participation of, notwithstanding their profession of the true God ; as appears, 2 Cor. vi. 16, 17, compared with 1 Cor. viii. 7, and as 1 Cor. x. 14, 20, 22, recites ; and not for some few or more members, who shall make themselves both judges and parties to make separation, when and as often as they please, from the whole congregation and church of God, where they stood related ; for by the same rule, and upon the same ground, may others start some new question among these new separatists, and become their own judges of the communicableness of them, and thereupon make another



separation from these, till at last two be not left to walk together. And for that other text mentioned, 2 Thess. iii. 6, where Paul exhorts the church of Thessalonica to withdraw themselves from every brother that walks disorderly; I cannot but wonder that any should bring this to justify their separation or withdrawal from the communion of a true (though a disorderly) church. For,

(1.) Consider, that this was not writ for a few members to withdraw from the church, but for the church to withdraw from disorderly members.

(2.) Consider, that if any offended members, upon pretence of error, either in doctrine or practice, should by this text become judges (as well as parties) of the grounds and lawfulness of their separation; then it will follow, that half a score notorious heretics, or scandalous livers (when they have walked so as they forsee the church are ready to deal with them, and withdraw from them), shall anticipate the church, and pretend somewhat against them, of which themselves must be judges, and so withdraw from the church, pretending either heresy or disorder; and so condemn the church, to prevent the disgrace of being condemned by the church. How needful then is it, that men of peaceable dispositions, and not of froward and fractious and dividing spirits, be chosen to rule the church of God, for fear lest the whole church be leavened and soured by them!

4. As there must be care used in choosing men to rule the church of God, so there must be a consideration had, that there are many things darkly laid down in scripture; this will temper our spirits, and make us live in peace and unity the more firmly in things in which we agree; this will help us to bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ, inasmuch as all things necessary to salvation and church communion are plainly laid down in scripture. And where things are more darkly laid down, we should consider that God intended hereby to stir up our diligence, that thereby we might increase our knowledge, and not our divisions, for it may be said of all discoveries of truth

we have made in the Scriptures, as it is said of the globe of the earth, that though men have made great searches, and thereupon great discoveries, yet there is still a *terra incognita*, an unknown land ; so there is in the Scriptures : for after men have travelled over them, one age after another, yet still there is, as it were, a *terra incognita*, an unknown track to put us upon farther search and inquiry, and to keep us from censuring and falling out with those who have not yet made the same discoveries ; that so we may say with the Psalmist, when we reflect upon our short apprehensions of the mind of God, that we have seen an end of all perfection, but God's commands are exceeding broad ; and as one observes, speaking of the Scriptures, that there is a path in them leading to the mind of God, which lieth a great distance from the thoughts and apprehensions of men. And on the other hand, in many other places, God sits, as it were, on the superficies, and the face of the letter, where he that runs may discern him speaking plainly, and no parable at all. How should the consideration of this induce us to a peaceable deportment towards those that differ !

5. If we would endeavour peace and unity, we must consider how God hath tempered the body, that so the comely parts should not separate from the uncomely, as having no need of them ; 1 Cor. xii. 23-25. There is in Christ's body and house some members and vessels less honourable ; 2 Tim. ii. 20. And therefore we should not, as some now-a-days do, pour the more abundant disgrace, instead of putting the more abundant honour upon them. Did we but consider this, we should be covering the weakness, and hiding the miscarriages of one another, because we are all members one of another, and the most useless member in his place is useful.

6. If we would live in peace, let us remember our relations to God, as children to a father, and to each other as brethren. Will not the thoughts that we have one Father, quiet us ; and the thoughts that we are brethren, unite us ? It was this that made Abraham propose terms of peace to

Lot ; Gen. xiii., " Let there be no strife," saith he, " between us, for we are brethren." And we read of Moses, in Acts vii. 26, using this argument to reconcile those that strove together, and to set them at one again : " Sirs," saith he, " you are brethren, why do you wrong one another ?" A deep sense of this relation, that we are brethren, would keep us from dividing.

7. If we would preserve peace, let us mind the gifts and graces and virtues that are in each other ; let these be more in our eye than their failings and imperfections. When the apostle exhorted the Philippians to peace, as a means hereunto, that so the peace of God might rule in their hearts, he tells them, iv. 8, " That if there were any virtue, or any praise, they should think of these things." While we are always talking and blazoning the faults of one another, and spreading their infirmities, no marvel we are so little in peace and charity ; for as charity covereth a multitude of sins, so malice covereth a multitude of virtues, and makes us deal by one another, as the heathen persecutors dealt with Christians, viz., put them in bears' skins, that they might the more readily become a prey to those dogs that were designed to devour them.

8. If we would keep unity and peace, let us lay aside provoking and dividing language, and forgive those that use it. Remember that old saying, " Evil words corrupt good manners." When men think to carry all before them, with speaking uncharitably and disgracefully of their brethren or their opinions, may not such be answered as Job answered his unfriendly visitants, Job vi. 25, " How forcible are right words ; but what doth your arguing reprove ?" How healing are words fitly spoken ? A word in season, how good is it ? If we would seek peace, let us clothe all our treaties for peace with acceptable words ; and where one word may better accommodate than another, let that be used to express persons or things by ; and let us not, as some do, call the different practices of our brethren, will-worship, and their different opinions, doctrines of devils, and the doctrine of Balaam, who taught fornication,

&c., unless we can plainly, and in expressness of terms, prove it so. Such language as this hath strangely divided our spirits, and hardened our hearts one towards another.

9. If we would live in peace, let us make the best constructions of one another's words and actions. Charity judgeth the best, and it thinks no evil; if words and actions may be construed to a good sense, let us never put a bad construction upon them. How much hath the peace of Christians been broken by an uncharitable interpretation of words and actions? As some lay to the charge of others that which they never said, so, by straining men's words, others lay to their charge that they never thought.

10. Be willing to hear, and learn, and obey those that God by his providence hath set over you; this is a great means to preserve the unity and peace of churches: but when men (yea, and sometimes women) shall usurp authority, and think themselves wiser than their teachers, no wonder if these people run into contentions and parties, when any shall say they are not free to hear those whom the church thinks fit to speak to them. This is the first step to schism, and is usually attended, if not timely prevented, with a sinful separation.

11. If you would keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, be mindful, that the God whom you serve is a God of peace, and your Saviour is a Prince of peace, and that "his ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace;" and that Christ was sent into the world "to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet in the way of peace."

12. Consider the oneness of spirit that is among the enemies of religion; though they differ about other things, yet to persecute religion, and extirpate religion out of the earth, here they will agree; the devils in the air, and the devils in the earth, all the devils in hell, and in the world, make one at this turn. Shall the devil's kingdom be united; and shall Christ's be divided? Shall the devils make one

shoulder to drive on the design of damning men, and shall not Christians unite to carry on the great design of saving of them? Shall the papists agree and unite to carry on their interest, notwithstanding the multitudes of orders, degrees, and differences, that are among them; and shall not those that call themselves reformed churches, unite to carry on the common interest of Christ in the world, notwithstanding some petty and disputable differences that are among them? Quarrels about religion (as one observes) were sins not named among the Gentiles. What a shame is it then for Christians to abound in them, especially considering the nature of the Christian religion, and what large provisions the Author of it hath made, to keep the professors of it in peace! insomuch (as one well observes), it is next to a miracle that ever any (especially the professors of it) should fall out about it.

13. Consider and remember, that the Judge stands at the door. Let this moderate your spirits, that the Lord is at hand. What a sad account will they have to make when he comes, that shall be found to smite their fellow-servants, and to make the way to his kingdom more narrow than ever he made it! Let me close all in the words of that great apostle, 2 Cor. xiii. 11, "Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you."

POSTSCRIPT.—Reader, I thought good to advertise thee, that I have delivered this to thy hand in the same order and method in which it was preached, and almost in the same words, without any diminishings or considerable enlargings, unless it be in the thirteen last particulars; upon some of which I have made some enlargements, which I could not then do for want of time; but the substance of every one of them was then laid down in the same particular order as here thou hast them. And now I have done, I make no other account (to use the words of a moderate man upon the like occasion) but it will fall out with me, as doth commonly with him that parts a fray, both parties may



perhaps drive at me for wishing them no worse than peace. My ambition of the public tranquillity of the church of God, I hope, will carry me through these hazards; let both beat me, so their quarrels may cease, I shall rejoice in those blows and scars I shall take for the church's safety.

FINIS.





